

# **DIXON HAWKE'S**

## **CASE BOOK**

### **Nº 7**

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# DIXON HAWKE'S CASE BOOK — No 7 —



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# DIXON HAWKE'S CASE BOOK—No. 7

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# THE CASE OF *The Alarm Clock*



"**T**HE Moravian Embassy on the phone for you, chief!"

Tommy Burke, assistant to the famous detective, Mr Dixon Hawke, spoke in a hushed voice. There was a gleam of excitement in his eyes. It was very unusual for a foreign Embassy to call Dover Street.

Dixon Hawke eased himself out of the comfortable chair where he had been passing a lazy hour. There had been no crimes of importance in the great city for some time, and the detective was frankly bored.

"Yes?" he said sharply into the instrument. He listened for a moment and then spoke again. "Certainly, Your Excellency. I will come at once."

"A case, chief?" Burke asked.

Hawke nodded as he clicked back the receiver. "Apparently," he said, "the First Secretary, Count Kelsy, has been found dead under peculiar circumstances. The Embassy prefers not to call in the Yard."

"Kelsy!" Tommy whistled. "I saw his photograph in a newspaper the other day. He has a very beautiful wife—and very young, too."

Leaving the Dover Street chambers, the pair took a taxi to Grosvenor Square, where the Embassy was situated. There was an air of subdued excitement about the place. Hawke was at once shown into the presence of the ambassador, a grey-haired aristocrat, whom he had met before.

"Mr Hawke," the ambassador said,

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"I know you for a man of great discretion. The matter which I wish you to handle is outside the jurisdiction of your Scotland Yard. This is Moravian territory, and we are responsible only to our own Government for any crimes that may happen here."

"Crimes?"

"As I told you over the telephone, Count Kelsy has been found dead, and the circumstances are peculiar. We shall be glad of your report."

Rising to his feet, the ambassador led the detective and his assistant along a corridor. They stopped outside a door where an Embassy guard was standing. The man clicked his heels and saluted. The ambassador motioned Hawke to enter.

The room was an office. A thick carpet was on the floor, and there were rich hangings at the windows. Against one wall was a desk, and in a chair behind it slumped the body of a man.

He was about sixty years of age. His head rested amongst the papers scattered before him. One hand was thrust forward over the polished top of the desk. Between the crooked fingers was the silver-mounted hilt of a duelling pistol. The slight breeze caused by the opening of the door stirred the dead man's thick hair. He looked as if he were sleeping.

### The Caked Soot.

HAWKE walked forward and examined the body. There was no wound. Lifting the head of the corpse, he gave an exclamation at the sight of the face. It was frozen in an expression of horrible fear. The lips were blue, and dry foam was caked over them.

"Heart failure," Hawke said quietly.

"We know that." The ambassador's voice was curt. "But why the expression? Why the pistol in his hand? Why was it fired?"

"Fired! Then the shot was heard?"

"It brought us into the room, Colonel

Karin, the military attache, happened to be passing at the time. He was the first to find the Count. It could not have been more than a minute after the shot was fired that he entered the room."

"And he found nobody here except the dead man, of course," Hawke mused. "Decidedly curious!"

With a silk handkerchief he lifted the pistol from the limp hand. The weapon was beautifully made. On the butt was the Count's initial. Hawke knew that duelling was permitted in Moravia, and it was, therefore, not surprising that the dead man should have possessed such a gun.

In keeping with the laws of duelling, only one shot could be fired. The weapon took a charge of powder and a ball, which was forced down the barrel with a ramrod.

Around the muzzle was a thin coating of soot. Hawke frowned as he rubbed it with his finger-tip. "Curious," he muttered. "You did not, of course, find the ball?"

The ambassador started with surprise.

"No," he said. "Both Colonel Karin and myself searched for it. But how did you know there was no ball?"

"Obviously. There was only a wad in the pistol. I can see that by the fact that soot from the explosion is caked over the muzzle. If there had been a ball, it would have offered sufficient resistance to keep the explosion-line lower down the barrel."

He bent suddenly and picked up a small travelling clock which stood on the desk near the dead man's elbow. It was fitted with an alarm. Hawke turned the winder and found that the spring was run down. He studied the time-setting dial.

"When was the body found?" he asked abruptly.

"About noon——"

"The alarm is set for that time!" Hawke said. "Now, why should the Count wait for the alarm to go off and then fire his pistol? It isn't the act of a

# The Alarm Clock

rational man—or maybe that was his signal."

He whirled around to the opposite side of the desk. Crouching on his knees opposite the dead man, he examined the polished surface of the mahogany. A soft exclamation followed.

"Finger-prints!"

The detective's keen eyes had found several smudges on the edge of the desk. He looked at the under-side of the over-lapping edge and found another. It was the mark of a thumb.

Someone had sat opposite Count Kely, and the visitor's left hand had gripped the edge of the desk—had gripped it violently in a moment of tension.

## The Beautiful Countess.

"THE finger-print camera, Tommy," Hawke said quietly.

His assistant brought the apparatus up from the car. Hawke rarely went on a case without it. The tripod was set up, the camera with its giant lens focussed, and aluminium powder dusted over the smudges on the desk.

A knock on the door interrupted the proceedings. Into the room came a youngish man, very handsome, and with a definite military bearing. His quick eyes darted an interrogative glance at the detective. He asked some question of the ambassador in his native tongue.

"Colonel Karin," the head of the Legation introduced him.

Stiffly, arrogantly, the colonel bowed. His hand fumbled in his pocket and came out with a half-crown held between thumb and forefinger. He played nervously with the coin.

"I trust that you can solve the mystery of my friend's death," he said. "I'm greatly distressed."

He flipped the half-crown into the air. It spun almost to the ceiling and then began to drop. Colonel Karin caught it between the first two fingers of his

right hand. One moment the coin was there, and then it was gone. A slight smile lit up the dark face of the Moravian as he looked at his empty hand.

Then the smile faded. He swung anxiously towards the door. The guard on duty was trying to stop a tall, beautiful woman from entering the room.

"The Countess Kely!" exclaimed the ambassador to Hawke.

Colonel Karin was ahead of his superior in reaching the side of the Countess. His deep voice vibrated. He bowed over her hand. With gentle insistence he led her out of the room. The others followed.

The ambassador, putting his arms around the slim shoulders of the girl, tried to comfort her. Then he introduced Hawke, who tendered his sympathies.

"When did you last see your husband?" he asked gently.

"This morning," The Countess spoke English with a delightful, husky accent. Her big eyes watched the detective with fascinated interest. "How did he die?" she whispered. "Was he shot?"

"No; it was heart failure," Hawke said. "Did he have a weak heart?"

"Oh, yes!"

Relief eased the tense lines of the girl's face. She sighed faintly and turned towards Colonel Karin. Her slender hand rested lightly on his arm.

"See me to my car, please, Alexis," she said.

As the graceful figure swayed down the corridor leaning on the arm of the tall soldier, Hawke watched them.

"Colonel Karin is an old friend," the ambassador said in explanation.

"So I understood," Hawke said. "Excuse me, Your Excellency, but I must continue my investigations. These finger-prints may prove interesting."

Hawke returned to the room. Burke again adjusted the camera and made the exposure. He took three photographs, and then packed up the plates

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and hurried away to develop them. Hawke faced the ambassador gravely.

"Do you think," he said, "it will be possible to get the finger-prints of everybody in the Embassy? I must know who sat opposite the Count before he died."

"That matter must rest with the individual members of my staff," the head of the Legation said stiffly. "They are gentlemen!"

"Quite," Hawke said. A smile twitched his stern lips as the ambassador left the room. He realised that he had made a diplomatic error in suggesting that a member of the Embassy might have played a part in Count Kelsy's death. After another glance at the dead man he drew a screen around the desk.

There was a rap upon the door.

"Come in," Hawke said.

### The Forbidden Finger-prints.

ONE of the under-secretaries entered. He clicked his heels and bowed.

"I shall be glad to allow you to take my finger-prints," he said with great formality, "and those of my colleagues also."

Hawke sat down at a table. From his brief-case he took out a number of small cards. He pushed an inking-pad towards the Moravian, and guided the man's hand as he impressed his prints on one of the cards.

One by one, in complete silence, the other members of the staff followed. Then the door opened, and Colonel Karin came into the room. There was a flash of anger on his dark face.

"What is this?" he asked harshly. "Do I understand that you dare to finger-print us like common criminals? In Moravia a policeman would not dare to take such liberties!"

"It is purely a matter of form," Hawke said soothingly. "There are prints on Count Kelsy's desk which—"

"His death was accidental!"

"Possibly," Hawke smiled. "However, I would like to discover by what accident he died. It is not usual, my dear colonel, for a man to set an alarm for midday and fire off a duelling pistol as a signal of his own death."

"The clock I cannot understand. The pistol I do. The Count had a pair of them always with him——"

"Ah!—and I only found one. Where can the other be, Colonel Karin?"

"I do not know. I'm not a policeman. That is your business. I came here to tell you that I would not suffer the indignity of being tabulated like a criminal."

"That is unfortunate. Your colleagues have all obliged me."

"I refuse! The Count was my greatest friend!" The Moravian's eyes blazed, and, clicking his heels, he started towards the door. Hawke's voice rang out—sudden, sharp, commanding.

"Colonel Karin! Are you afraid?"

The man stopped. For a moment he stood there with his back to the detective. His fists were knotted. Then he whirled to face the accuser. "Afraid?" he spat. "How dare you!"

Hawke had risen to his feet. Colonel Karin came towards him, stopping about a yard away. The two men looked at one another, the English detective calm and smiling, the Moravian flushed, and trembling with fury.

Colonel Karin's hand fumbled in his pocket. He pulled out a half-crown and tossed it into the air. Neatly he caught it. It vanished from his finger-tips as he held it before Hawke's eyes.

"In my country," he said, "you would answer for that insult with your life. Ah, but I cannot expect a cowardly policeman like you to face me over the table with pistols!"

Dixon Hawke did not answer, but a mocking smile pulled at his lips. In a sudden outburst of rage the Moravian struck him twice across the face. The detective's fist shot out next instant.

## The Alarm Clock

Colonel Karin staggered to the wall, his hand clutching a very painful jaw.

"I should be pleased," Hawke said, "to accept your challenge. Duelling is not permitted in Britain, but we will settle the matter privately at my Dover Street chambers. Will you call this evening, colonel! Please bring pistols with you."

A man muffled up in a long overcoat, his face hidden by the brim of his hat, came out of the London fog and slipped through the doorway of a house in Dover Street. He rang the bell of Mr Dixon Hawke's apartment.

The detective himself came to the door. He led his visitor to the study at the back of the consulting-room. Colonel Karin, for he it was, slipped off



In a sudden outburst of rage Colonel Karin struck Hawke twice across the face.

The detective picked up his hat and coat and went to the door.

On the threshold he paused and looked back. "We will settle the matter in the Moravian manner—over the table!" he said.

As he went out he saw Karin's restless fingers playing with the half-crown. It vanished as he appeared to toss it into the air.

"I'll be there!" the colonel snarled.

his coat and placed an oblong case on the table in the centre of the room.

"The fog is fortunate," he said. "When you are dead, I can leave as secretly as I entered."

"Excellent!" Hawke smiled as he opened the case and examined the two pistols. They were unloaded, but powder and ammunition were in another box which Karin slid across the table a moment later. "I've never

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loaded a pistol," the detective said.

### Preparations For The Duel.

THE colonel reached out for the powder-horn. Then he looked slowly and suspiciously around the room. At one end were heavy draperies. The deep red folds seemed to way as if there was a draught. Hawke followed the Moravian's glance.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

Colonel Karin swung round with a savage oath. Snatching up one pistol, he poured a charge of powder down the barrel. Then he forced a little wind of felt after it, using a ramrod to compress the charge. His hand went out to the ammunition. Between thumb and fore-finger he picked up a ball. He rolled it slowly to and fro.

"Nasty-looking, isn't it?" he jeered. "Have you anything to say before I kill you?"

"Quite a lot," Hawke rested his elbows on the edge of the table. "How long have you been in love with the Countess Kelsy?"

There was a thud as the heavy ball dropped from the colonel's fingers. His eyebrows met in a savage frown.

"Ah, so you know that!" he muttered. "I suppose you also know that the Countess is fond of me!"

"Oh, yes. I suppose it was natural that a beautiful but rather foolish young girl should be attracted to the dashing Military Attache of the Embassy. Did the Count find out, or did you tell him?"

The colonel's hand trembled as he picked up the ball again. He prepared to drop it down the barrel of the pistol.

"It was, of course," Hawke went on, "the reason for the duel—the reason why you faced him across his desk. Careless of you to leave those finger-prints behind."

The Moravian shrugged his shoulders.

"What matters it?" he said. "Per-

haps we shall both die to-night. In any case, I shan't leave finger-prints here!"

The ball vanished into the muzzle of the pistol. With quick-moving fingers the man tapped it down with the ramrod. He slid the weapon across the table after carefully wiping it with a silk handkerchief. He started to load the second gun.

"What shall be the signal?" he asked.

Hawke placed a small alarm clock beside them. He turned the winder and set the dial.

"For midnight," he said, "not mid-day—this time!"

He picked up the pistol and balanced it in his hand. Karin had completed the loading of his own. He leaned forward and looked at the clock.

"Five minutes to go," he said.

Hawke nodded. Then he gave an exclamation and got to his feet. He walked towards the window at the back of the room.

"The light is directly behind you, colonel," he said. "It gives me an unfair advantage." He started to pull down the dark blind, but the roller would not move. "Please help me," he called over his shoulder.

Colonel Karin stood up and came over, leaving his pistol on the table. Between them the two men arranged the blind. Hawke started back to the table rather hurriedly. Clumsily he caught his foot on the rug and tripped. He fell across the table, sending a chair crashing to the floor.

"Not heart-failure, colonel," he said with a smile as he got to his feet. "Just a little accident."

The two men sat down again. There were three minutes to go. They picked up the pistols and rested the barrels on the table. Hawke turned the face of the clock away from them, so that they could not see the moving hand. There was silence in the room except for the faint ticking.

From behind came a faint rustle, a murmur. Karin started. "What was that?" he demanded. Hawke replied,



# The Alarm Clock

"You are nervous, colonel. Just the wind."

Again there was silence. The ticking of the clock grew louder. All lights had been turned out with the exception of a single reading lamp. It threw a mysterious glow over the table. Karin's face, lean, handsome, seemed, in the darkness, like a mask. The eyes were narrowed. The lips were slightly parted, showing his set, white teeth. The hand which held the gun was immobile.

Dixon Hawke lounged in his chair. He held his gun lightly. His eyes smiled. He might have been a man playing a friendly game of cards.

## A Complete Reversal.

THE alarm shrilled suddenly through the stillness.

The barrels of the two guns came up. From the pistol of the Moravian came a spurt of orange flame. Smoke belched. The room was filled with the roar of the explosion.

Across the table Hawke's smiling face appeared through the smoke. He had not moved, but his finger now tightened on the trigger.

"Missed, colonel?" he asked.

"Impossible!"

Karin swayed on his feet; stared stupidly at his smoking pistol; dropped it with a clatter to the table. Perspiration was streaming down his face.

"May I fire now?" Hawke asked.

"Perhaps this gun is loaded."

"What do you mean!" Karin screamed.

Hawke leaned forward. He towered over the crouching man. The smile had gone from his face. Stern and accusing, he pointed to the pistol which he held.

"Only one gun was loaded with a ball!" he said. "It was the same when you faced Count Kelsey. That time, however, you held the loaded gun.

Kelsey fired a blank. You loaded his guns as you did now—with that little sleight-of-hand trick you do so well with a half-crown!"

His voice sank to a whisper.

"It was no duel, Karin. It was planned murder! You would go to the scaffold if it weren't for the fact that the Count dropped dead from heart failure before you could fire."

The man on the other side of the desk screamed. "A lie! A lie!" he cried.

"It is not! Do you remember helping me with that blind, Karin! Do you remember how I stumbled and fell over the table! I changed the pistols then. You had mine and I had yours—and look!"

The detective tapped the barrel of the pistol against the edge of the table. The ball slipped out and dropped into the palm of his hand. He held it up. The Moravian gave an insane shriek. Springing round the desk, he rushed at Hawke.

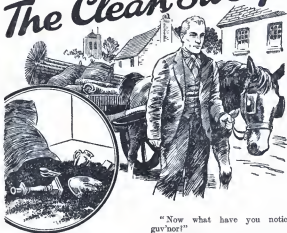
The man was big and powerful and completely carried away with rage. The detective jumped back quickly, and his fist swung in a powerful chop. As Karin staggered back, Hawke struck him again. A third blow to the side of the jaw sent the man to the floor. He rolled close to the red hangings at the back of the room.

"You're guilty of attempted murder against Count Kelsey and myself!" Hawke said. "The charge against myself I shall not press. The Moravian Embassy, however, will certainly act on the report that I shall give them. As for the Countess Kelsey—I wonder if she is still fond of you?"

Dixon Hawke pulled a silk cord. The heavy red draperies parted. In the alcove behind were three people. One of them was Tommy Burke. The others were the Moravian Ambassador and the Countess Kelsey.

"I had some difficulty to persuade them to come," the detective smiled, "but I imagine they're grateful!"

# THE CASE OF *The Clean Sweep*



**T**ROTTING through the streets of the village was a pony drawing a sweep's cart.

Tommy Burke watched it from the window of the hostelry where he and Dixon Hawke had been staying for the night.

"It isn't often you see that these days," he said, and as he turned he was surprised to find Hawke standing at his side; the famous detective had approached so silently that Tommy had not heard him.

"You don't in London," agreed Hawke, watching the sweep go by, the pony stepping out briskly, brooms, sticks and sacks sticking from the back of the cart. The sweep was an oldish man with very grey hair, and he was hatless. "In fact," added Hawke with a smile, "you don't often see a sweep like that anywhere."

Tommy looked puzzled.

"Now what have you noticed, guv'ner?"

"Nothing you can't," smiled Hawke, but as he spoke the sweep turned a corner and disappeared.

Tommy grimaced, but did not ask Hawke to enlighten him. There had been something unusual about the sweep, but he could not think just what it was. The problem was in his mind while he bathed and dressed, and even during breakfast.

Hawke made no further reference to it.

The London papers had not yet arrived, and both of them glanced through local papers in the dining-room. Tommy looked up with a grin.

"Here's something right on our doorstep, guv'nor."

"You mean the local cat-hurgleries?" asked Hawke.

"Yes—is it in your paper, too?"

"Very much so," said Hawke. "I imagine its causing the local gentry

# The Clean Sweep

plenty of worry, not to mention the police. However, we've enough to do in London and we won't worry about it."

Fifteen minutes later he was waiting for Tommy to bring the big car from the converted stables which served the inn as a garage. He actually had taken the wheel and was pressing the self-starter when he heard the clatter of horse's hooves not far away, and a deep voice called:

"Hawke—Hawke! Don't go yet!"

Hawke took his hand off the self-starter and looked round. Astride a grey hay hunter a hurly man in homespun tweeds was still calling him, even now, when it was obvious that the car was not moving. Hawke smiled and stepped out of the car.

"Hullo, Squire! What brings you out in such a hurry?"

"Harrump! Thought I'd missed you. Galloped like the devil all the way from the house!" A mighty hand enveloped Hawke's as they gripped. Keen blue eyes, shining from a red, weather-beaten face, turned to Tommy. "Harrump! This young cockerel is your assistant, I suppose? How-do-ye-do, young feller-me-lad?"

Tommy permitted his hand in turn to be crushed in the vast fist. The grip was powerful, but well controlled.

"That's right," said Hawke.

"Tommy Burke—Mr James Mayfield. So you still practise detective methods, Squire?" he added with a twinkle in his eyes.

Mayfield let out a roar of laughter.

"I'll say I do! But no nasty reminders from you, Hawke! I once turned down an offer of assistance from the finest detective in the world," Mayfield added for Tommy's benefit, "and tried to solve a problem myself. I had to call on him for help in the end, and it looks as if I shall again. Can you spare a day or two, Hawke?"

Hawke looked regretful.

"I'm afraid not, Squire. I've some Government work that will have to have attention first thing to-morrow,

and I want to get home to-day to clear up correspondence."

"Oh." Mayfield did not try to hide his disappointment. "Truth is, Hawke, my fellows are stymied. And the Yard can't spare a man for what they call minor crime just now. Take my tip—never become a Chief Constable."

"What's the trouble?" asked Hawke. "The country house hurglaries?"

"Got it in one! Been reading the papers, I see. Look here, come and have lunch with me, and see if you can give me an idea or two. Don't say 'No', he added earnestly. "I didn't hear until this morning that you were about, and I came after you without waiting for breakfast."

Hawke smiled.

"Well, if I've cost you a breakfast, I suppose I can't refuse you an hour or so. But I must be off immediately after lunch."

"That's a bargain," said Mayfield. "I'll leave my horse here and drive up with you. I can give you the main facts on the way. Let your assistant earn his keep by driving—I'll talk in the back to you."

Tommy Burke chuckled. The breeziness of the squire was likeable and attractive, and certainly the older man did not propose to lose a moment. Moreover, Mayfield's voice was so loud that while driving Tommy could hear every word.

## The Gentle Cracksmen.

THE outlines of the case were simple enough.

For over two months there had been a series of hurglaries at the bigger houses in the district. Several thousands of pounds, as well as valuable objets d'art had been stolen, but nothing had been recovered.

Some houses had been burgled twice, and even three times. It seemed to matter not a whit what precautions were taken; the thief went in and out at will.

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"Using a key or a pick-lock?" asked Hawke.

"Sometimes a pick-lock, sometimes a window," answered Mayfield. "Take my word for it, the man is a clever cracksman—one of the best. He cuts glass out as clean as a whistle, and never makes a sound. He has a way with dogs, too. They never seem to bark at him."

"Any violence against dog or man?" asked Hawke.

"Not a bit! He was surprised once by a servant—wears a handkerchief over his face to hide himself, so he wasn't recognised. But he could have knocked out the maid and carried on. Instead he ran off and didn't touch her."

"That might have been because he had the wind up," said Hawke. "But an expert cracksman wouldn't be so easily scared. Have you had any trouble at your house?"

"No, not yet. But Townsend's place next door was burgled last night."

### "Collector's Mania."

"NEXT door" really meant a mile soon discovered. Hawke suggested that Mayfield should go to the Manor House for his belated breakfast, while Hawke and Tommy went to see Mayfield's neighbour, Townsend.

Townsend was a smaller man than the squire, and a different type altogether. Quiet, precise, a scholar rather than a gentleman-farmer, he greeted the detective in his pleasant library.

"Mayfield was saying only yesterday how much he wished you were available, Mr Hawke, and he appears to have been lucky. Well, I won't waste your time. I lost about three hundred pounds last night, as well as some silver plate of which I was particularly proud. Intrinsicly it is not worth much. Actually it is very rare Georgian silver."

"Could it be easily disposed of?" asked Hawke.

"No, only through an expert fence. I don't need to tell you much about the habits of criminals. I know. You will be aware that collectors of antiques will often buy stolen goods, although except for that one kink, they are scrupulously honest."

Hawke nodded.

"I know. 'Collector's mania' gets into the minds of the least likely people. Where did the thief break in?"

"By the side door—he cut a pane of glass right out."

They went through Townsend's fine old house. On all sides was evidence of the owner's careful preservation of old furniture, and much of that in the house dated from the sixteenth century.

Oil paintings of men and women looked down from the walls. In many there was a decided likeness to the aristocratic face of Townsend.

Hawke made no comment until they reached the side entrance and its small hall. A window pane quite big enough for a man to get through had been cut in the side of the door, and the glass was standing against the wall.

A policeman in uniform saluted.

Townsend explained Hawke's mission and the man's respect grew visibly.

"Glad to help all I can, sir. There's nothing in the way o' fingerprints, they've been checked. Same as all the jobs—not a thing to help us."

"Has the time been established?" asked Hawke.

"No, sir, I——"

"It was some time after midnight and before seven-thirty," said Townsend. "My secretary looked up last night—we never leave it to the servants, since the burglaries started—and he was down first this morning."

"Was he?" asked Hawke mildly. "Where is he now?"

"In his room. Would you like to see him?"

"I'll see the burgled safe first," said Hawke. "But before I come I'd like

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to ask one or two questions of the constable."

"All right! When you want me, ring for a servant."

"I think I'll find my way," said Hawke.

The constable looked surprised

"I see. Have any strangers come to the village this last six months. Or to the surrounding neighbourhood?"

"Well, sir, there are dozens of evacuees from London."

"Anyone else?"

"No gentry, sir."



Hawke arrived just in time to see Benson knock the squire backwards on to the settee.

at being left alone with Hawke and Tommy, but he answered their questions promptly.

"Do you know the countryside well, officer?"

"Born and bred here, sir, yes."

"Good. These burglaries started three months ago, I'm told."

"Just twelve weeks, sir, to the day."

"What about tradespeople? Butcher, baker, grocer—or chimney-sweep, for instance?"

Tommy started at the mention of the sweep, but not so much as he did when the constable said:

"Funny you should mention the sweep, sir. Anderson, what does the sweeping these days, is new. No one

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likes him, sir." It was obvious that the constable was becoming fired with the idea, for he went on with something akin to excitement: "Don't smoke or drink or swear—a proper goody-goody you'd think he was!"

Hawke smiled.

"Steady, now! No jumping to conclusions! Is he the only newcomer who could be anywhere about the countryside without arousing suspicion?"

"All the others have been here for donkey's years, sir."

"It might help," said Hawke. "But don't say a word about this to anyone, constable, except your inspector if he asks questions."

"I won't, sir," promised the constable.

### The Old Lag.

WHEN Hawke and Tommy were out of ear-shot, Tommy said with excitement:

"I've just realised what there was odd about the sweep we saw. He was clean—as if he'd just changed his clothes!"

"That's right," said Hawke. "A clean sweep, in fact—and we saw him at a time of morning when you would think he would be well started with his day's work."

"By jingo, yes!" exclaimed Tommy. "And he would have plenty of chance to examine doors and locks, and even to get impressions of the locks wouldn't he?"

"Yes," said Hawke. "It's at least interesting. And there's a job in it for you, old son. Try to find where he lives, and look about. Take the car, but don't take chances."

Tommy was off like a shot, and Hawke smiled as he found his way up to the library. Townsend was dictating to a short, swarthy-skinned man—the type Tommy Burke would have instinctively disliked and distrusted.

"Ah, here we are," said Townsend.

"We'll have a look at the safe, Benson. It's in the dining-room, Mr Hawke."

The old dining-room was oak-beamed and raftered, and the safe was cunningly built into the wall—close to the old ingle-nook fireplace. Benson showed it to Hawke, and Townsend said:

"This is our second burglary, Mr Hawke. The first time the safe wasn't touched. This, as I've told the police, was just after the chimney had been swept."

Hawke looked up sharply.

"What did the police say?"

"They were interrogating Anderson, the sweep, I believe."

"I see," said Hawke.

He examined the safe, an old-fashioned one, which was locked by keys. A pick-lock might have been used, or a duplicate set of keys which scratched the lock a little. There was no trace of fingerprints.

"Right, and thank you both," said Hawke. "I'll get back to the Manor House now."

"With everything solved, I suppose?" It was the secretary, Mr Benson, who spoke, and there was an ill-concealed sneer in his voice.

"That will do, Benson!" said Townsend sharply.

"Perhaps Benson will explain why he was downstairs as early as half-past seven this morning," said Hawke.

"I was waiting for that!" flashed Benson. "Because I don't lie in bed for the best part of the day, but I didn't do the job, see! You and the narks can't prove I did!"

Townsend looked aghast at his secretary.

"Benson, what are you saying?"

Benson realised that he had let himself say too much, and tried to hedge, but Hawke said coldly:

"He talks in the language of an old lag, Mr Townsend. And I'll guarantee he's been in prison."

"Good heavens!" gasped Townsend. "His references were excellent."

"A reference can easily be forged,"

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said Hawke, and Benson edged towards the door. "We will be able to prove our case against the thief all right!"

Benson swore at him and then ran from the room. Townsend moved as if to stop him, but Hawke kept still.

"Why on earth did you let him go, Hawke?"

"He'll turn up again," said Hawke.

"Yes, hut—hut Benson! Do you think he has been responsible for all the burglaries?"

"It's too early to say anything yet," said Hawke. "I—"

He broke off, for a deep voice bellowed from the hall:

"Stop, you fool! Don't be an idiot! Taken leave of your senses, have you? I—ouch!"

Hawke lost no time in getting into the hall. He arrived just in time to see Benson land a beautiful wallop on James Mayfield's jaw.

The squire collapsed on to a settee by the open front door, and was rubbing a reddened chin and staring bewilderedly about him.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Townsend—what's happened to Benson?"

"He's practically admitted the burglaries," snapped Townsend. "Hawke allowed him to go—"

"Don't get excited," said Hawke. "Are you all right, Squire?"

"I—I suppose so," said Mayfield. "But I can't believe it. I just had word from my inspector that Anderson, the chimney-sweep, is suspect. They've gone to his cottage."

"And that's where we're going," said Hawke. "In your car, Squire! Coming, Mr Townsend?"

Townsend answered by stepping to the car. Hawke took the wheel, and Mayfield directed him to the chimney-sweep's cottage.

Hawke's big car was parked nearby, and so was a police car. As Hawke stopped, a clear, angry voice came from the open door of the cottage.

"This insolence will be paid for,

Inspector! I deny any connection with the burglaries, or any association with dubious characters. I am a God-fearing man, and I break neither the laws of God or man."

"You'll have a job to explain this stuff away to a jury," said another man's voice.

## The Sweep Protests.

HAWKE moved swiftly, and reached the cottage ahead of the others. In the large room which opened from the front garden, the sturdy, grey-haired chimney-sweep was standing and glaring hard-eyed at the local inspector.

On the floor, tumbled out of bags dirty and black with soot, were numerous articles, not identifiable because of the soot which covered them. One piece gleamed where someone had wiped it, however. It shone with the bright gleam of polished silver.

Mayfield followed Hawke inside.

"Harrump! Good work, very good indeed! Caught him red-handed, have you! See, Hawke, my fellows have found the missing stuff."

Townsend entered, looking dazed.

"But—hut my secretary, Benson, ran away when he was accused of the crimes," he exclaimed.

"I don't think that's quite right," said Hawke. "He ran because he knew that once inquiries were made about him it would be discovered that he was an ex-convict, and that his references were forged. Consequently he knew that he would be suspected immediately, and he tried to get away. There will be no difficulty in finding him if he's wanted, however."

"Anderson will confess and tell us if Benson's wanted," barked Mayfield.

"I have already stated that I am completely innocent," answered the chimney-sweep, and there was something dignified in his manner which appeared to impress even Mayfield.

After some seconds Townsend said,

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"I am beginning to see the truth, I think. It was Benson who reminded me this morning that the robbery coincided with the sweep's visit. Doubtless he and Anderson worked together—Benson, whom I have trusted implicitly, has always been able to go out at any time during the night. He has told me he sleeps badly, and I thought that he was telling me the truth."

"Good gad!" exclaimed Mayfield. "And we've been looking for a man whose movements by night were unaccounted for. He—he's only been with you three or four months too."

"I realize how foolish I've been now," said Townsend.

No one else appears to realize the whole truth," said Dixon Hawke. "Squire, put two and two together. Townsend has a house full of priceless antiques, yet employs a dubious character as secretary—an obvious criminal type—"

"Nonsense!" Townsend snapped, but his colour had ebbed. "Benson came to me with excellent references."

"Had you taken the normal precaution of checking his references," said Hawke, "you would have learned the truth. You say he was always out at night, but if that were so it shouted suspicion. In fact, I think it's a lie."

"What the devil are you saying, Hawke!" gasped Mayfield.

"I'm accusing Townsend of lying," said Hawke quietly. "And I have little doubt that if a thorough search of his house is made, stolen antiques will be found there. Those he 'stole' from his own house he pushed here, to cover himself and to have two 'suspects' ready for the police—Benson, whom he deliberately employed as a cover for his own plan of campaign, and the sweep, a newcomer to the district with ample opportunity for the crimes. With two such covers he considered himself quite safe."

"Good—good gad!" gasped Mayfield. "Do you know what you're saying, Hawke! Townsend's one of us

—been here all his life—family lived here for generations."

"Precisely," said Hawke. "And therefore the last man to be suspected by the locals. But when a stranger arrived, it grew obvious, because of Benson primarily, but also because he tried to cover himself by explaining to me the motive of his crimes."

"You liar!" blazed Townsend. "I've everything I want—money, position."

"Not quite everything," said Hawke. "You admitted your knowledge of men with a mania for antiques. Your home is a treasure-house of them."

"You'll never prove it!"

"If the missing goods aren't in your house, then I'm wrong," said Hawke.

He did not have to admit anything of the kind, for the police found all the stolen property in a cellar at the house.

Benson was also found, some miles away, and Townsend broke down, confessing he had employed the man in order to work suspicion on to him if any trace of the stolen goods was found in his home. He put the money—which might have been easily traced—and some of the goods he did not want, in Anderson's shed, to be out of the way.

"Astounding thing," said Squire Mayfield at lunch.

"I could have sworn Anderson was the man," said Tommy. "especially when you told me to watch him. I worked up such a theory, too. He obviously hadn't come fresh from work, and I thought he was all cleaned up because at the burglaries he daren't leave traces of soot."

Hawke smiled grimly. "I was working on those lines, Tommy, but Townsend was so obviously a man with something to hide, that I worked on him first. Actually I don't think I would have come back on your job, Squire, if it hadn't been for the clean sweep."

"And you certainly made a clean sweep," roared the squire. "Jolly good, eh? Joke, you know."

Discreetly, Tommy and Hawke winked at each other.



# THE CASE OF *The Ready-Made Clue*



"**H**O, ho!" said the expression on P.C. Hobson's face. "What's all this 'ere!"

A dusty and unshaven tramp, who had just come in from the main highway, had had the effrontery to nod a greeting as he clattered in his hobnailed boots across Hatherton's sun-drenched market square.

The officer did not respond in the genial manner in which, for instance, he had just welcomed a similar greeting from Mr John Straker, chief clerk to Mr Arthur Pick, solicitor.

Mr Straker had just gone to Mr Pick's office, towards which the tramp was also headed.

The constable pivoted slowly round, his face offensively blank as he studied

the tramp's every movement.

His eyebrows went up and he took a pace forward as he watched the tramp cup his hands around his eyes

in order to peer in at Mr Pick's window.

But shooting a swift glance over his shoulder, the tramp abandoned his scrutiny and set off briskly down the street, turning left at the end of the block.

P.C. Hobson followed him as far as the corner, where, for about twenty minutes after the itinerant's disappearance round the bend at the top of the hill, where Mr Pick's private house was situated, he remained taking a rest.

But suddenly the drowsy peace was shattered by a hoarse shout from the top of the hill, and Hobson turned to behold Mr Arthur Pick's swarthy, thick-set male servant, Dawkins.

"Hurry. It's murder," gasped Dawkins, as Hobson puffed up the slope

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to the house. "Mr Pick's been stabbed."

Hobson had a look at the still figure which lay on the thick carpet of a drawing-room furnished like a museum, and he noted the wavy-bladed Malayan kris which protruded from between the shoulder-blades, when, happening to glance out of the window across the fields, he saw the tramp once more.

Hobson ran across the newly-dug garden, following a trail of footprints, and broke through a gap in the wooden fence.

As he set off across the field beyond, the tramp turned and observed him, then broke into a run.

Stricken to a standstill by the sudden horrifying thought that the stabbed man might still have life in him, P.C. Hobson hesitated for a moment in an agony of uncertainty, and then decided it was his duty to go back and instruct Dawkins to summon a doctor. When he got back to the house he discovered that the valet had already done so.

The tramp had by this time got too good a start, and so Hobson phoned his station, from where a district call was put out.

### The Intellectual Tramp.

**A** RIDE on the tail-board of a lorry took the fugitive tramp into the heart of a great Midland city forty miles away, before he was captured, and it was in the Central Police Station of that city that Dixon Hawke and his assistant, Tommy Burke, first saw him.

For them, as for Detective-Inspector Gray of Scotland Yard, who had been working with them on a Government inquiry, the tramp was not at first a particularly interesting figure.

No individual amidst all that bustling life could be of outstanding interest.

"It'll be another hour or two before they get that bomb crater on the main line filled in," declared Inspector Davis,

a local C.I.D. man. "If you don't relish the idea of hanging about you can come down as far as Hatherton with me. There's a main line junction there.

"The only drawback is," he went on, on discovering their ready assent, "you'll have to put up with a tramp as a travelling companion. He's fairly wholesome, though, as tramps go. They've given him a bit of a rinse and dusted him over."

"What's he wanted for?" asked Tommy.

Davis shrugged his shoulders slightly. "Dunno exactly. I fancy I heard the warrant officer say something about murder. Stabbing charge. He's quite tame, though. Won't give us any trouble. As I was saying," he went on, turning to Gray, "about the confounded muddle over that bally traveller's cheque book. . . ."

The journey was made in a large saloon car, the tramp sitting on the back seat with Gray and a constable, to whom he was handcuffed.

Tommy sat on a folding seat facing them, and Hawke sat by the side of Davis, who drove.

"And is wandering about without visible means your main occupation?" Gray asked the tramp when hedgestops and trees were streaking past the windows of the limousine.

"Me? Certainly not! I'm an artist," said the tramp, who had given the name of Michael Grogan.

"Pavement artist?"

"Huh! That mock in the Tate Gallery and the Royal Academy isn't to be compared with my pictures!"

"When d'you paint them? What do you do with 'em?"

Grogan's expression changed in a subtle manner, and it became clear to Tommy and to Hawke, who had turned in his seat, that he was a distinctive personality.

"I paint them as I roam the countryside, mister. And I keep 'em in my head."

"Hm? Then what?"

# The Ready-Made Clue

"I don't use brushes and canvas. I think my pictures, right down to the last dab of colour. Then I lose interest and start to work thinking another. I've never actually painted one."

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"What's your own opinion?"

"I should have thought you'd hardly be in the mood for providing amusement," put in Hawke, studying him with interest.

Grogan looked suddenly furtive and hunted.

His bronzed, bristly face had unusual expressive power, and his every change of thought seemed to register there.

"Those bally intellectual tramps are the worst," asseverated Davis. "They devote all their thoughts to the ennobling subject of Work. But they never actually do any."

"I know," agreed Gray. "Ask one to chop firewood, and the axe isn't sharp. Give him the axe to sharpen, and the grindstone wants fixing. Ask him to fix the grindstone and he wants a man to help him. Give him a man to help him, and then the man gets all the work to do, and the 'hardworking' tramp goes on a sit-down strike."

"Or turns rough," suggested Davis.

"I never turn rough, mister," said Grogan. "This is all a mistake. I don't know anything about any murder. I aroused suspicion because I ran when I saw the sloop running towards me. It was instinct. That sloop had followed me through the town. I sat on a stile just outside for a while, and then started across a footpath. Then I happened to look round, and I saw him running towards me. So, naturally, I ran. That's all I know."

## The Important Footprints.

**A**BURLY, apple-checked superintendent with a gingery, tooth-brush moustache was criticising P. C. Hobson when the party arrived at Hatherton Police Station.

Superintendent Bennett was a plain-

thinking, country police-officer who used doubtful language in a brisk and cheerful manner.

"So you didn't think about the footprints in the garden when you planted your great plates o' meat on 'em, did you. Why, you great long slab!"

He gave the visitors only the most perfunctory greeting, turning his attention, almost immediately, to Grogan's feet.

"Hobnails!" he queried. "Yes. And the footprints in the garden—what's left of 'em—are hobnailed."

"It don't follow they were mine," said Grogan.

"It don't follow they were old Pick's. He had too much money to go in for hobnails. Unless they were diamond ones. Your face is familiar. Haven't I seen you round this district before?"

Grogan shook his head.

"You seen him before, Hobson?"

"No, sir."

A few moments later, Bennett was telling the visitors, in the heartiest manner, just what had happened, and how he proposed to go about procuring the necessary evidence.

The visitors chuckled as, with the greatest good humour—in the manner of one who has just accepted a challenge to deliver a lecture—Bennett put his foot on a stool and rested his elbow on his knee.

"I shall go down to the chemist's and get some plaster of paris, see! And I shall make casts of a couple of the clearest of those footprints. And then I shall send 'em, along with Grogan's boots, to the county C.I.D. They'll have gutta percha replicas made, if necessary, and there won't be any possibility of mistake."

"What about the question of motive?" put in Hawke, with the slight display of shyness becoming a layman in such heavy official company.

"Motive! H'm. H-rr-umph! Robbery. Footprints lead right up to the french windows of Mr Pick's study, and back the same way. Garden mud on

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the carpet. Grogan was wandering about thinking the place had been left unattended. Bit of luck if it had. Lot of stuff in it. Antiques, old brasses, miniatures, and so on.

"And while he was wandering about," added Bennett, "Pick came on him suddenly, and he snatched that old dagger off the wall. There are lots of those things stuck up on walls, all over the place."

### Blackmail Is Suspected.

EVENTS moved with dramatic swiftness during the next few minutes.

A tall man, with a ruddy complexion not acquired in the open air, and a flashy body that, at first glance, gave the appearance of being well muscled, came in response to a phone call from Bennett.

This was Mr John Straker, Mr Pick's chief clerk.

"It's just who I thought it would be," said Mr Straker to the surprised company, after taking one look at Grogan. "It's no use trying to hide your identity, Grogan."

Grogan's lower lip was trembling, and his fingers wound and unwound in convulsive movements as he turned appealingly towards Hawke.

"I didn't kill him," he declared. "I knew something had happened when I heard Dawkins enter the drawing-room and call out Mr Pick's name, and then rush out shouting for the police. I thought I'd better make myself scarce."

"He's Mr Pick's half-brother," explained Straker, "and he seems to have a lot of gipsy blood in him, or something. Anyway, he's always lived that roaming life, and he's been coming back periodically to sponge on Mr Pick for funds."

Grogan's lips curled and he looked increasingly scornful, as Straker, determinedly antagonistic, went on:

"In fact, I think he must have been

blackmailing Mr Pick. He's squeezed large sums out of him. . . ."

"Hey! Where d'you get that! Large sums!"

"I have access to all Mr Pick's accounts. I've been acting as his private secretary, as well as his chief clerk."

"Twenty pounds," declared Grogan. "That was as much as I ever touched him for. And I'd make that last me a year. Sometimes two. I've tramped from Spain to Sweden on less."

Straker shrugged his shoulders.

"The accounts tell a different story," he said, and glanced significantly at the superintendent.

"You've already made a couple of statements which have proved false, Grogan," said that official.

Grogan, who had now learned Hawke's identity, grasped him by the coat lapel.

"Find out the truth of this for me," he pleaded. "Either somebody's trying to plant the blame on me, or the fates are working against me. All I know is—I didn't do it."

"I was a fool to tell all those lies," he went on, "but it was for my daughter's sake. I didn't know what to do. You see, Arthur's brought her up, and she doesn't know her old man's a hobo by choice. She'd lose caste, and social standing always did mean a wonderful lot to all my family."

"Would that be the young lady from London that stops with Mr Pick sometimes?" queried Bennett.

Straker nodded in affirmation.

"Her mother died when she was an infant, and Grogan went off and left her on Mr Pick's hands. She thinks her father's dead, too."

"The principal reason why I went off," put in Grogan, "was that I couldn't stick the life of a family of middle-class snobs. It's my only vice: insisting on living like a human being instead of like a stuffed shirt."

"What happened when you arrived at Mr Pick's house?" asked Hawke.

"You ought to get legal advice before you talk," said Straker, meticu-

# The Ready-Made Clue

lously adjusting his soiled yellow gloves, which he wore unbuttoned, and rolled about his wrists.

"I'll talk," said Grogan. "I've nothing but the plain, unvarnished truth to tell, and you don't need lawyers for that.

"I'd looked in through the window of his office in the town," he went on, "and when I saw he wasn't there, I went straight up to the house. He was a man who never moved out of his one groove, and I knew I'd find him in his study. It's always been the same, every time I've returned here throughout the past twenty odd years.

"I went in by the back way, so's to be unobserved, and stepped in through the french windows of his study, and sat down and waited for him.

"I'd been sitting for about a quarter of an hour when I heard Dawkins moving through the front hall from the direction of the kitchen. I heard him entering the drawing-room and call out: 'Mr Pick. My God! What's happened! Murder, murder!' He opened the front door, and I heard him calling out to the slo—the constable there.

"I thought: 'Hallo, something's wrong. Maybe I'd better get out of this,' and so I promptly hopped it."

## Hawke Stays The Night.

"I MUST say," murmured Hawke to Bennett, after Grogan had been removed to the cells, "I feel an urge to believe his story. Would you have any objection to my looking over the material evidence with you?"

The superintendent agreed.

After Davis and the constable had left, Hawke, Gray, and Tommy visited Pick's home, The Fir, a large detached house in spacious grounds.

Dawkins, whose deferential tones were quite out of keeping with the sinister appearance imparted by a broken nose resulting from an accident, showed them round the house and grounds, and stated that he had been

taking a quiet "snooze" in the kitchen immediately prior to the discovery. He was not aware of Grogan's presence, and had not heard anyone approach or leave. He was, as the visitors noticed, a trifle hard of hearing.

Hawke got down on his knees and examined the carpets in the study, the drawing-room, and the hall, near the spot from which the kris had been taken.

He also picked up a copy of a magazine from the study floor and put it under his arm.

"I'd like to have a run-through this. I'll bring it back," he promised.

Then he went right round the house and made a careful examination of the well-scrubbed steps at each of the three entrances, and also of the door knobs.

Gray expressed his determination to get back to London.

"I'll stay here for the night," said Hawke. "This affair gets interesting."

Tommy had the impression that his employer was in the process of brilliantly uncovering a startling truth.

"There's a wicket gate at the end of the garden path, opposite that side entrance," remarked Hawke, after Gray and Bennett had left them. "Slip around and find where it leads. I'll go and book rooms down at the hotel which the 'super' mentioned. Hather-ton Arms, wasn't it?"

Tommy nodded and turned back towards The Fir.

Darkness was closing in rapidly when he found his way round to a back lane on the other side of the wicket gate.

A narrow, gravelled path, walled in on each side, wound a tortuous course downhill.

Opposite the backs of a terrace of tall houses, it turned sharply left.

Tommy directed the beam of his torch on each side of the back steps of these houses, and found that each one had a quantity of the crushed red gravel on it that covered the lane.

"Most of the inhabitants use that back way," he later reported to Hawke. "If you're thinking that the murderer used that way, and that you might

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trace his footprints, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed."

Hawke nodded appreciatively.

"Hatherton is full of these convenient back ways," he said.

Next morning, shortly after breakfast, Tommy found Hawke looking decidedly pleased.

"I've found something that I expected to find," he said, "and that's usually a sign of progress."

Bennett came. He was looking even more pleased, and his pleasure reversed Hawke's.

"That dagger thing," he said. "What d'you think? Got Grogan's fingerprints on it. Clear as you could wish."

"Really! Was that fellow just filling me up with lies? I can't believe it. I'd have made a bet he was telling me the truth."

"Our fingerprint expert's still up at the station. You can come and see for yourself."

### The Permanent Prints.

THE fingerprints on the handle of the kris, which they inspected ten minutes later, provided a damning piece of evidence against Grogan, who, however, still fervently protested his innocence.

Hawke was preoccupied, and, at times a little irritable, for the rest of the morning. Then, just before lunch, he seemed to have a sudden inspiration.

He returned to the police station, and when Tommy saw him next, he was wearing a faint, triumphant smile.

After lunch, Hawke and Tommy adjourned to the billiard room, a converted loft, approached by way of an outside staircase, leading to a wooden platform, on to which the billiard room door opened.

Straker, as Hawke had learned by inquiry, was there practising billiard shots, waiting for the arrival of a friend.

In the role of spectators, they sat on the leather upholstered seat, and Hawke,

casually toying with Straker's lemon-coloured gloves which had been left there, opened a conversation about murder.

"Funny business over those fingerprints on the handle of that dagger," he said. "Quite remarkable in fact!"

"It suddenly dawned on me how strongly imprinted they were, and that was the whole point. They were difficult to rub off, and d'you know why? They were several years old! There were other prints besides Grogan's, but his were quite unmistakable. He must have handled it last time he was here. Or perhaps it was even longer ago. Goodness knows. The thing had been there for years. The faint film of grease from the skin must have acted as a protection against oxidation which affected the metal in between the ridges."

Straker picked up his whisky glass, took a sip, and seemed to become possessed of a dreamy fascination as he regarded Hawke.

"And talking about fingerprints," said the detective. "I learned that your offices have just been redecorated. I notice you got some of that green paint off the back door bolt on your fingers. It's inside your gloves, look. Apparently you didn't put them on until you got back inside Pick's house, for you left a green fingerprint on the knob of the side door of The Firs."

"What're you getting at?" snapped Straker.

"That painting was only done yesterday morning. You've been to The Firs since then by way of that back lane. I noticed the red gravel on the carpets in the hall and the drawing-room. It's quite different from that left by Grogan in the study."

"Grogan really did sit there reading a magazine," Hawke went on, "and he'd hardly have done that if he had committed a murder, would he? You see, there are other sets of Grogan's fingerprints in this case. On the glossy pages of that magazine."

Both Hawke and Straker showed

# The Ready-Made Clue

an increasing tenseness as the detective became more accusing.

"Are you trying to make out that I killed Pick, relying on years-old fingerprints to turn suspicion elsewhere? It's ridiculous. How should I even know about those fingerprints?"

"It has often struck me," said Hawke, "that, occasionally, everything in nature conspires to bring about one particular end. This was such an occasion. Just think how circumstances dovetailed in. You had had a row with Pick, possibly connected with some defalcations, from the consequences of which you'd been hoping to save yourself by marrying Pick's niece, who is, of course, Grogan's daughter.

"I found all that out this morning from one of your colleagues, who knows a little about you, and hears more than you would imagine.

"Anyhow, to proceed with my theme. Circumstances built themselves up to that inevitable culmination. A row with Pick. You got some drink inside you, returned to your office, and saw Grogan look in the window. You knew he'd go straight up to Pick's house, and, on a sudden impulse, you slipped out

the back way. From that moment fate seemed to adapt itself to your design. Or perhaps you were just the instrument of fate."

Whatever else he had been, Straker was certainly not a willing victim of fate. Sudden chagrin overcame him and, with murderous force, he threw a billiard ball at the detective.

Hawke ducked and it shattered the glass behind him.

Tommy bounded round the table and dived at the fuming man and together they crashed through the doorway, coming down heavily on the edge of the platform.

Straker was not as powerful as he looked, and the pair quickly overcame him and handed him over to the police.

"The amazing thing is," said Hawke subsequently, "that he didn't know Grogan's fingerprints were on that dagger. He just put his gloves on to conceal his own, but had no notion how well everything was working out for him. Fate, fickle old fate, was on his side all right."

"Only up to a point," chuckled Tommy.



# THE CASE OF *The Smuggled Diamonds*



**F**OR some seconds the telephone next to Dixon Hawke's bed remained unanswered.

Hawke, who had been up very late on an intricate case, stirred twice before he opened his eyes, realised that the phone was ringing, and sat up quickly.

He lifted the receiver and immediately a torrent of words, hurled into the microphone with a pronounced foreign accent, reached his ears.

"Hook, Hook, dat is right, pliz you come, pliz, pliz you come, most vital, most necessary, pliz you come, ze dangair I am in is great, most great—"

Hawke interrupted the torrent, very wide awake now.

"You're shouting too much," he said carefully. "Speak more quietly and give me your name and address."

"I geeve you what! Name an'—pliz, pliz, 'urry! I am at ze 'otel Grande, my name, it is—"

The speaker stopped abruptly. Hawke heard another voice, low-pitched and harsh, but he could not catch the words. Then the receiver was replaced at the other end of the line and silence ensued.

Hawke slipped out of bed, calling:

"Tommy, show a leg!"

Tommy Burke, hair dishevelled, and in his pyjamas, appeared in his door—



# The Smuggled Diamonds

way on the instant. He had been half-wakened by the phone ringing.

"Good man," said Hawke. "Get some clothes on quickly and telephone for a taxi. I'll tell you the trouble later."

## Tommy Disappears.

WITHIN ten minutes the famous detective and his youthful assistant were in a cab and on their way to the Grande Hotel. Dawn was just breaking.

All traces of sleepiness had disappeared from Hawke and Tommy, and the latter had been told the essentials of the urgent summons. That done, Hawke added—

"He was a foreigner, judging from his voice, and scared out of his wits. The other voice was English."

Tommy's eyes showed excitement.

"It's a queer business, all right, but what kind of luck are we going to have, searching through the Grande Hotel? It must have five hundred bedrooms."

Hawke eyed him humorously.

"You must be more tired than you look, old son! It's just turned half-past five. Not many people would put through a call at that time of the morning, and your job's to find out from the operator which room the call came from."

He finished as the taxi drew up outside the palatial hotel. A uniformed commissionaire was on duty, despite the hour.

"Wait, please," Hawke said to his driver, while Tommy hurried into the foyer and then up a short flight of steps and along a passage to the telephone switchboard.

A tired girl was sitting listlessly in front of it, brightening when Tommy switched on his best smile and said pleasantly:

"I'm awfully sorry to worry you so early, but my chief had a message from a client about half an hour ago, and we've forgotten the number of his room."

He knew the girl might refer him to the desk, assuming he knew the "client's" name, but he was lucky, for she said at once:

"There's only been two calls, and one was a long-distance. Room number—let me see—307, that's it, 307 made the local call."

"Thanks no end," said Tommy, and started back along the passage.

One wall of the short passage was unbroken, but from the other two doors opened, and standing by one of the doors was a tall, heavily-built man dressed in dark clothes.

"Excuse me, have you a match?" he asked.

"Er—no, I'm sorry," said Tommy untruthfully; he did not want to waste a moment. He stepped to one side, but the big man loomed over him, and suddenly Tommy saw the danger signals. He opened his mouth to shout, but a big hand closed over his mouth, and the cry was smothered.

Then the man shot home a jab to the point which sent the youngster reeling backwards.

Tommy hadn't a chance. The man was twice as powerful as he, and fought with a vicious ruthlessness. A second punch created a great sense of powerlessness in the youngster, the third made his head swim, and then he lost consciousness.

The hefty man looked about him quickly, heard a movement from the exchange, opened the nearest door and literally hurled Tommy inside. The door swung to just as the operator appeared, looking scared.

"Is—*is* anything the matter?"

"Some fool of a porter nearly knocked me over," snapped the big man. "What kind of a hotel is this?" He glowered at the girl, who apologised and went back to her switchboard.

The man made sure he was not observed, and then went in after Tommy, who was sprawled on the floor between a number of big laundry boxes, all on wheels. The man lifted the unconscious youngster, opened a

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No: 7

basket, and lowered Tommy, for whom there was plenty of room, into a half-sitting position.

Several towels were in the box, and the man wound one tightly about Tommy's face. The ends were not long enough to be tied again, and he pulled more tightly, muttering:

"That'll look after you, you interfering little swipe!"

The hefty man was sweating when he left the laundry storeroom. He looked furtively right and left, but saw no one.

Wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, he stepped into the foyer. There were several people about, despite the earliness of the hour, and the man shrugged as he muttered half-aloud:

"Two of them came, but I'm darned if I recognise the other. By jupiter, there isn't much time to spare!" He hurried to a lift, grunting, "Third floor and make it snappy."

### The Little Foreigner.

MEANWHILE, Dixon Hawke had waited for more than five minutes for Tommy. He imagined the youngster was having a difficult task to get the information, but just as he was thinking it time to go and investigate, he saw a short, tubby man step from the lift.

He was clearly a foreigner, and he was muttering to himself. He looked furtively about him as he crossed the foyer, put on a black Homburg hat, then went to the door. Twice he glanced over his shoulder.

Something about him quickened Hawke's interest.

Hawke followed swiftly and saw the man approach his own waiting taxi. He heard the foreign voice clearly:

"Pliz, driver, most important, yes. Pliz, pliz take me!"

Hawke stepped behind him as he continued:

"For only ten liddle minntes, it weel not take long, pliz!"

"Sorry, guv'nor—I'm on a job for

Dixon Hawke," said the driver, who knew Hawke well by sight, and saw him near. "If 'e don't want the cab for a quarter of an hour, ask 'im."

The fat foreigner turned on his heels. Hawke smiled and said evenly:

"I'm Dixon Hawke. Can I—"

"Hook. Hook, ze great Hook, ze one man in all ze world who can help me! Of your fame I 'ave heard, yes, pliz, pliz, you vill not say 'No!'"

"If I can help—" began Hawke.

He got no further, for the plump man flung his arms about him—or as far round as the short, stubby arms would go—strained himself to his full height on tiptoe, and actually tried to kiss Hawke's cheek. Hawke hacked hastily, while the taxi-driver did not try to hide a grin.

"'E's fond of yer, ain't 'e, guv'nor!"

"A little too fond," said Hawke ruefully. "Now, sir—" he had disengaged himself and managed to keep the excited foreigner at arm's length—"you apparently want to talk business with me!"

"Pisness, yes, zat is so!" Denied a closer embrace, the man linked arms with Hawke and, ignoring the taxi now, turned back to the hotel.

"Hook, I vake up early; in my room I find a t'ief. Yes, a t'ief who goes to my case, in which is ze most valuable of jewels—diamonds—all zat I 'ave with which to live, yes. Ze t'ief, out he goes, an' to ze telephone I hurry, an' call for you. Ze diamonds, where are they?"

Hawke raised his eyebrows.

"I can't perform miracles, m'sieu." He did not think the man was French, but imagined him to be Flemish or southern Dutch. A florid face, rather deep eyes buried in flesh, and a wide mouth were not particularly prepossessing.

"Miracles, no! But zey say to me if you air in trooble in ze England, sen' for Dixon Hook, yes. His address, zey give it to me, Hook!" He dived a hand to his inside breast pocket, while Hawke said:

# The Smuggled Diamonds

"Who gave you my address, m'sieur!"

"Zey did; my frien's in Amsterdam, befoore ze great German attack an' ze sad war!" From his wallet he took a card with a flourish, and Hawke read:

**Mynheer van Marak,  
Grande Hotel, London.**

By then they had reached the foyer of the hotel, and Hawke looked about for Tommy. He frowned when he saw no sign of the youngster, and moved towards the reception desk. Van Marak tugged at his arm.

"Hook, hurry, pliz, ze quickair you search the room ze bettair it will be. Pliz hurry!"

Hawke said sharply: "A moment, Mynheer. I have a message to deliver." He freed himself from van Marak, and reached the reception desk. A telephone inquiry to the switchboard told him of Tommy's visit there. Hawke's brows contracted.

"Have you been here all the time, miss?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said the receptionist. "I saw the young man go upstairs, hut he certainly hasn't come down."

"Then that means he disappeared somewhere between here and the telephone switchboard," Hawke said sharply. "Ah, porter——" He turned to a middle-aged man who had just come on duty, hut before he could speak van Marak said in an almost frenzied voice:

"Hook, Hook, pliz help me, pliz!"

Hawke snapped: "This is an important part of the case, Mynheer. I will try to get your diamonds back, hut you must let me work my own way at it."

He went on to the porter—"Is it possible for a man to be taken into any room between here and the telephone switchboard?"

The man looked startled.

"Well—there are two rooms in the passage, sir—a storeroom and the laundry room. But——"

"I want them searched immediately," said Hawke. He led the way,

with the porter by his side, a much puzzled man, and van Marak trotting along in the rear.

The porter went into the storeroom, Hawke and van Marak into the laundry.

"Zere is no'ting here," said van Marak. "You see, Hook! Pliz, 'ow you look for my jewels down here!"

Hawke ignored him and raised the lids of three laundry baskets. They were half-empty. The fourth was heavy when he pulled at it, and a moment later he had the lid back, and saw the top of Tommy's head.

Quickly he unwound the towel and lifted Tommy, helped by the porter, who had joined them.

Tommy was very red-faced, and unconscious. Hawke looked at him, tight-lipped, knowing that had he remained there much longer he must have suffocated. As it was, he would be unconscious for at least another fifteen minutes.

He gave hurried orders to the porter, and then took van Marak's arm.

"Now, Mynheer, I will come with you."

"So mooch time, it cos lost," complained van Marak, hut he went eagerly with Hawke to the lift, and they were soon in Room 307.

It was a large room and there was ample evidence of a struggle, and of the room having been searched. Drawers were pulled out, suitcases open, and the contents strewn on the floor.

"You see, I fight!" exclaimed van Marak. "I telephone you, from ze bed, you see."

He pointed to a telephone by the bed. "Zen ze door open again, a man, he returns, an' I am attack. I am for ze minute not all zere, you understand. Zen, when I awake, ze case eet is empty, ze jewels zey are gone."

With a trembling finger he indicated a suitcase which had a false bottom. The bottom had been cut open, and the cavity was quite empty.

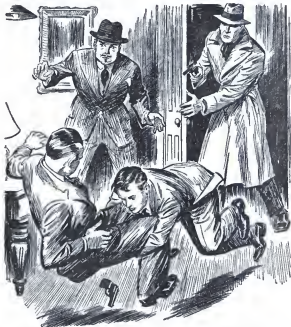
Hawke was fully twenty minutes

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

examining the room, and then, after a tap on the door, Tommy came in. He looked little the worse for his misadventure, and quickly described the hefty man to Hawke. Van Marak broke in with excitement,

I bring into zis country, I smuggle zem, yes, you know ze word. I smuggle zem. Zat is why I call for you an' not ze police. If zey know what I do, I pay ze big fine, yes."

His hands shot out appealingly to



Tommy flung himself across the room, and sent the big man crashing to the floor.

"Yes, yes, zat is ze man, ze describing is most good!"

"The police will have to get busy at once," said Hawke.

Van Marak's face dropped.

"Ze—ze police! But, Hook, pliz listen. I am ze poor man, ze diamonds

Hawke, who was silent for some seconds, thinking quickly.

Finally, Hawke said:

"All right, Mynheer. We will discuss that part of the business later, and for the time being we will tell the police only that this man attacked my

# The Smuggled Diamonds

assistant. That must be done," he added sharply. "Your name need not be mentioned yet, Mynheer. If your motives are good, I will do all I can to help you, but isn't it obvious that the assailant must be found?"

"Yes, yes, of course. But I undairstood zat you could do ze miracles, Hook!"

Hawke wasted little time explaining that even he could not search the whole of London for the hefty man, and he went out saying that he would see the police.

Then from the foyer he put a call through to Room 307. Van Marak answered it, but Hawke asked him to get Tommy to speak.

"Listen carefully, old son," said Hawke urgently. "Tell van Marak there is a possibility that he is still in danger, and stick by him until you hear from me again. Don't let him out of your sight—that's essential."

"Right!" said Tommy. "Do you think there might still be some stuff around?" he added in a low voice van Marak could not catch, and Hawke chuckled.

"It wouldn't surprise me. If he's smuggled one lot of diamonds into the country, he might have smuggled others. If he goes out, accompany him."

"Right! I'll stick like a limpet," Tommy promised. "How long will you be?"

"Not too long," promised Hawke.

Tommy replaced the receiver and passed on his instructions to van Marak.

Van Marak looked perturbed for the moment, but his face quickly cleared again, and they stayed in the room for an hour, putting it straight. Then van Marak suggested breakfast, and over the meal said he had an appointment for half-past eight.

"I mus' keep it. I was to sell ze diamonds, but now—ze huyer, he weel get not'ings, I weel get not'ings. Here

am I, helpless, an' Hook, 'e does not help."

"He'll do everything he can," said Tommy sharply.

Van Marak looked harassed and the youngster felt really sorry for him. Obviously he was not looking forward to telling the would-be huyer that the diamonds had been stolen.

Tommy wondered whether it was part of a widespread smuggling organisation; wondered also what Hawke was doing.

## More Trouble For Tommy!

HAWKE was not back by eight-fifteen. "We mus' go," said van Marak. "You will come with me, yes?"

"I'll look after you," promised Tommy, and they went by taxi to a house in Victoria.

Van Marak's hands were a little unsteady when he rang the bell. A manservant opened the door—and then Tommy was ushered in, with van Marak behind him.

Waiting in a downstairs room was the hefty man.

Tommy gasped and drew back.

"What the devil's this! Van Marak, who——?"

"I—I did not expect him!" gasped van Marak, and he stared into a revolver which the big man held. Tommy felt absolutely helpless as the big man said:

"Keep your mouths shut, both of you. And——"

He stopped abruptly, for from another room came the sound of breaking glass, and there followed a loud banging on the front door. The big man leapt for the passage, but before he reached it the door was flung open and Hawke came in.

Hawke was carrying an automatic, but Tommy saw the crook's revolver raised.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Tommy flung himself across the room, and the weight of his rush sent the big man against the wall, and the gun clattered to the floor.

Van Marak was hopping from one foot to the other.

"Ze t'ief, zat is him! He will 'ave ze jewels!"

Hawke said sharply: "I don't think so! Keep where you are, van Marak—ah, the police!"

Several men had come into the house, dragging along the frightened servant and led by Detective-Sergeant Willis, whom Hawke knew well. "Sergeant, have the house searched at once. You'll find another man here, I think, a foreigner, like this man in build—the genuine van Marak."

The fat foreigner gasped: "It is mad, mad, yes! I am van Marak, I——" he turned and rushed to the window, digging his hand into his inside breast pocket as he went.

Hawke reached him and gripped his wrist tightly. From powerless fingers dangled a wash-leather bag, and from it Hawke poured a stream of diamonds flashing in the early morning sun.

"He—he did have them!" gasped Tommy.

"Yes," said Hawke grimly. "He had them all right. It was very cleverly worked out at a moment's notice. The real van Marak had these diamonds and was robbed. He managed to phone me, but the thieves overheard him, attacked him, and got him out of the hotel, probably at the point of a gun hidden in one of their pockets. When we arrived, the big man looked after you, but I was hot on the scent, so they thought that by putting up a man to pretend to be van Marak, I would be completely hoodwinked."

"The nerve of it!" exclaimed Tommy. "And he had the sparklers on him all the time!"

"Yes. The idea was that I would put the police on to the big man, who would not have the diamonds even if

found. Without them there would have been little evidence against him. Meanwhile the impersonator was to dispose of the gems. But I ordered you to stick close to him, knowing he would make an effort to get rid of you. So he brought you here, not knowing that I had phoned for the police and, with them, was waiting. We all followed you here and didn't lose any time."

"Then you suspected van Marak when you phoned me?"

"I suspected the man who called himself van Marak," corrected Hawke, "although he tried to pretend that the diamonds were smuggled, to explain his reluctance to have the police on the trail. But he made one blunder which I saw immediately. Had he really been the victim he would have stayed in his room and faced me there. Instead he hoped to get away without my seeing him, but when I followed him to the cab, he put up a brilliant act. Then he tried to stop me searching for you, that was another pointer. I could have tackled him there, but I wanted to make sure I got the whole hunch, for I knew someone with a different voice was involved. Thus I let him think that I trusted him."

They saw the real van Marak, not seriously hurt, later. He insisted on paying a generous fee, for the diamonds were legally his, it transpired.

He had been pushed away from the telephone, and then forced from the hotel at the point of a gun held by the third crook—the man-servant at the Victoria house.

"Ow you solve it is ze miracle!" van Marak declared. "Ten thousand pounds of jewels, saved by you!"

Hawke smiled. "Ye-es, happily. And that is the key to the problem: the impersonator did not once say how much the jewels were worth. Had his sorrow been genuine he would have made a big point of it. That confirmed my suspicions."

"Trust you not to miss a thing," grinned Tommy.

# THE CASE OF *The Crusted Snow*



"LOOK out, there!"

"Mind your backs!"

An excited roar followed shouts from a dozen people, every voice merging into one great shout. Dragged to the crest of the snow-covered hill a toboggan carrying five people was pushed on the downward slope.

Fast gathering speed, it flashed past the spectators, and shining eyes and red, glistening faces showed in the light of a half moon. Frost had bound the snow to the bare branches of giant trees, to the shrubs and the hedges, to the roof of Willington Hall.

"Hi there, guv'nor!"

Dixon Hawke heard the shout as Tommy Burke flashed past him on a smaller toboggan, behind a pretty girl muffled to the neck.

Hawke smiled, and then turned as footsteps crunched in the snow behind him. A tall, handsome man in a heavy ulster greeted him.

"Hallo, Hawke! What do you think of the party!"

"You deserve everyone's thanks, Willington," said Hawke promptly.

"Oh, nonsense," said Mark Willington gruffly. "These people deserve a break if anyone does."

Week after week Mark Willington threw open the doors and grounds of his country house, entertaining as many as twenty war-workers at a time. Food was plentiful, the bedrooms were comfortable, and rarely was there any disturbance from the skies.

Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke had been on a case in a nearby town. Willington had seen them, and had immediately invited them for the weekend. And Tommy was certainly getting every ounce of enjoyment out of it.

"Hallo, Daddy! Coming for a slide?"

A tall, smiling girl approached, with two men escorting her. Hawke saw two things immediately. First, that she was lovely; second, that she only

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

smiled with her lips. Her eyes, he thought, were worried and anxious. Nor did he think there was need to look far for an explanation of that, when he saw her two companions.

One man was also forcing a smile, although his eyes looked angry. The second man made no pretence at being in a good humour. He was shorter but broader than the other, and his hair was dark. The first man was fair.

"I'll leave that to you youngsters," said Willington. "Peggy, I don't think you've met Mr Hawke. Hawke, this is my daughter. And—" he looked at the fair man, who made a show of affability, "this is Mr Deane, a friend."

"How do you do!" said Peggy and Deane almost at the same time.

"And another friend, Mr Mordaunt," said Willington.

Mordaunt did no more than grunt, and the trio walked to the top of the hill. Half-a-dozen people were dragging a sledge to the top.

Deane kept a hand on Peggy Willington's arm. Mordaunt walked a yard away from her on the other side.

When they were beyond earshot, Willington murmured to Hawke:

"I wish I knew which of these two men Peggy really cares for. Deane's a much better tempered fellow—in the Army and a decent sort. Mordaunt has some kind of Government job, and it hasn't improved his manners. However, let's get back to the house for a drink."

Before they had gone ten yards, however, something whizzed past Hawke's face. He turned—and a snowball struck his hat, sending it flying. Laughing, he stooped and picked up a handful of snow, crushed it, and hurled it at the youngsters who had started pelting him.

It was a signal for a general battle!

In a few minutes toboggans and sledges were quite forgotten, and the air was thick with flying snowballs. Hawke and Willington beat a hasty retreat, but as they drew beyond reach

of the missiles, Willington exclaimed: "Would you believe that! The surly brute!"

"That" was Mordaunt, who had hurried away from the crowd, but met a stray holidaymaker who promptly tossed a snowball at him. Mordaunt's voice echoed clearly across the snow as he shook his fist and shouted: "Don't act the fool! Haven't you grown up yet!" Then he strode on to the house.

Hawke smiled.

"His temper certainly isn't at its best."

"This will probably finish him with Peggy," said Willington.

"Probably she has already made that clear," said Hawke. "It could explain his general manner."

"By George, yes! I hadn't thought of that," said Willington.

They went in by the side door. Despite the efforts of several servants, the stone-paved hall was wet, and here and there lay fragments of crusted and melting snow. Rows of wellington boots were lined up by one wall, but traces of snow continued along the back quarters to the front hall.

### The Snow Clue.

**I**N a few minutes they were in the study, and Willington took one a decanter of whisky and two glasses. Hawke was looking at the carpet in one corner of the room, and his expression made Willington say: "You look as if you're trying to compete with Mordaunt!"

"That's a frown of concentration, not bad temper," said Hawke quietly. "How many people come into this room?"

Willington stopped pouring whisky.

"No one should, unless I send them. Why?"

Hawke stepped to the corner and picked something up. Willington saw that it was a piece of crusted snow, melting a little.





Mordaunt shook his fist, and shouted :—"Don't act the fool !"

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"Great Scott! No one has been to that corner—not you or I, I mean."

"That's what aroused my interest," said Hawke.

He watched Willingdon closely. The latter put down the decanter, and stepped to the corner, where stood a small safe. His tall figure was tense.

"Don't touch that!" rapped Hawke, and Willingdon drew his hand back quickly from the door of the safe. "There might be prints."

Hawke stepped to Willingdon's side as the other said in a sharp, angry, voice: "Nonsense, Hawke! I don't believe anything has been touched!"

"It's as well to be on the safe side," said Hawke, taking a handkerchief from his pocket. "Is there much of value in there?"

"Ye-es," said Willingdon in a strained voice. "There are several hundred pounds—I went to the bank to-day and drew enough for the month. And—there are the family jewels, Hawke. I've kept them here since the bombing started in London. I thought they would be safer with me. Hurry man, don't keep me in suspense!"

### A Strange Request.

**H**AWKE pulled gently at the door. It opened without any trouble, and Willingdon uttered an exclamation.

"It's unlocked!"

"I'm afraid so," said Hawke grimly.

Not only was the outer door unlocked, but the door of the inner compartment was ajar. Hawke pulled it wider open, to find that the safe was empty.

"I—I can't believe it," gasped Willingdon. "I put a small jewel-case in there just before I came out, and everything else was there then!"

"What time was that?" asked Hawke.

"It couldn't have been a quarter of an hour before I met you outside."

Hawke glanced at his watch.

"That means the safe was untouched

quarter to ten, and we've been together for half an hour. But we may be able to establish the time of the theft more accurately than that."

at nine o'clock," he said. "It's now a 'How!' asked Willingdon.

"Is there always an even temperature in this room?"

"Yes—it doesn't vary when the windows are shut. It is centrally heated, of course."

"Good," said Hawke briskly. "I'm going to my room to get my kit. Will you send for Tommy, and tell him to come up here without taking his boots off!"

"I'll do that," said Willingdon. "But why with his boots on?"

"You'll see," said Hawke quietly.

### Hawke's Memory Test.

**H**AWKE moved towards the door as Willingdon pressed a bell, but before he reached it the latter said in a low voice:

"Hawke, those jewels were family heirlooms. I must get them back! I'm not so worried about the money as about them. I—I don't want a scandal. Thank heavens you happened to be here! I would have hated to go to the police."

As the last word was uttered, the door opened from the outside. Peggy Willingdon stood on the threshold for a moment, her lovely face animated but clearly anxious.

"Did I hear the word 'police'?" she demanded.

"I'm afraid you did," said Hawke gravely. "Your father will explain, Miss Willingdon, but I earnestly request you both to keep the facts to yourselves, at least for the time being."

Leaving the girl mystified and worried he went up to his bedroom. He had a full set of equipment with him, but after taking it from his case he rested in an easy-chair for some minutes. Not only did he want to give Willingdon a chance to talk to his daughter, but he

# The Crusted Snow

needed a respite for concentrated thinking.

He had no opportunity to do that on his own, however, for Tommy came clumping into the room in his heavy boots to which snow still clung. There was snow on his mackintosh and even in his hair. His face was a bright red, glowing with health.

"Someone said you wanted me, gov'nor."

"Yes," said Hawke. "Have a seat now, old son, and let me give you a memory test. How many people did you notice going to or coming from the house for half an hour before the snow-fight started?"

Tommy looked puzzled, but answered promptly.

"There were three different lots, that's all. A man and a girl who had been sky-larking in the house—the girl was on a small sledge with me. Three older men, auxiliary firemen, I think. And then that stunning Willingdon girl, Peggy."

"Can you be sure there were no more?"

"Yes—except that Miss Willingdon had her two boy-friends with her. I was watching the house most of the time, looking for you," Tommy added with a grin. "But what's the matter, gov'nor?"

"Robbery," said Hawke, briefly. He picked up a frozen piece of crusted snow from one of Tommy's boots, and laid it on the floor. "Hop out again, and if any of the people you saw are missing, try to find them. Don't count Miss Willingdon. I know where she is."

"Right!" Tommy was, as always, eager to get busy on anything mysterious. "What's missing, gov'nor?"

"Five hundred pounds, mostly in notes, and some family jewels."

"By Jingo! A haul for someone!"

Tommy hurried out and Hawke went quickly to the study. Willingdon and his daughter were sitting there, grave-faced. As Hawke entered he glanced at his watch, and then placed the lump of

crusted snow on the carpet near the safe. He had carried it on a piece of cardboard so that the heat of his hands did not melt it.

"What on earth is that for?" demanded Peggy.

"A little experiment," smiled Hawke.

"Have you made any progress?" asked Willingdon.

"There hasn't been a lot of chance yet," said Hawke, "but I've narrowed the list of suspects somewhat. It's a great loss to you, Miss Willingdon, I know. The jewels would have been yours one day, I understand."

"On my marriage, yes," said Peggy. "But it is going to be extremely difficult for you to find them, isn't it? There are so many strangers here, and you can never be sure of the type of people who come for these week-ends."

"That's so," said Willingdon. "I had never realised before how risky it might be to give such people the run of the house."

Hawke frowned.

"I wouldn't jump to conclusions," he said. "Poor—or so-called lower-class—people are just as honest as the so-called upper-class. In fact, as far as honesty is concerned, there isn't a pin to choose between them. However, I am not going to jump to conclusions either."

"Aren't you going to start a search of the rooms?" asked the girl.

"Later, if necessary," said Hawke quietly.

## Caught In The Act!

**M**EANTIME Tommy Burke was watching the holiday-makers in that carnival of snow. They seemed so happy that it was beastly to know that some of them were suspected of stealing from their benefactor. But he had no time for loose thinking, and he was quick to see two things.

The fair-haired Deane was laughing and joking with the civil-defence workers, and in no way proclaiming the

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

fact that he was an Army officer. He had told Hawke, Willington and Tommy that he preferred to be in civvies because his uniform might otherwise cause some awkwardness.

Tommy had formed a good impression of Deane then, and the impression was confirmed. But he was more interested in Mordaunt, who was missing.

It was not difficult to see about the grounds, for dark-clad figures were shown up vividly. The noise of laughter and high spirits faded, and then he saw Mordaunt who was walking by himself.

Tommy saw the man stop. He looked down at something in his hand. It was paper of some kind, and he bent down, looked about him, and then began to move snow away from a small bank. He pushed whatever he was holding into the hole, and then straightened up, and glanced round.

Tommy tried to dodge out of sight behind some trees, but was too late. Mordaunt saw him and snapped: "Who the devil is that?"

### The Scuffle In The Snow.

**T**OMMY moved quickly to one side. He slipped, however, and then Mordaunt was on him. By then he was on his feet, and dodged a heavy blow from Mordaunt. He countered, but Mordaunt was no fool with his fists, and a much stronger man. He struck again, and the blow sent Tommy sprawling to the ground.

"You confounded, interfering, little fool!" snapped Mordaunt. "I've a good mind to break your neck!"

Tommy scrambled to his feet, pale-faced.

"I'm ready if you want to try," he answered, and for a moment he thought that Mordaunt would come for him again. But instead the man swung round and walked away.

Tommy shrugged and went to the hole. After some trouble he found it,

and brought out what Mordaunt had hidden. He stared down, excited and yet not wholly surprised. A wad of notes, probably five hundred pounds worth, was in his hand.

He used his torch to make a more thorough inspection of the hiding-place, but found no trace of jewels. Then he retraced his steps, hurrying to the house.

Half-way up the stairs he met Mordaunt. The man had a suitcase in his hand, and was obviously planning to leave. Tommy stood square in front of him, grim and determined. He saw the light of recognition in the other's eyes, and was prepared for a rush. But before it came, a door opened and Hawke appeared.

Tommy said sharply: "I've got the man, guv'nor! Mordaunt had the notes in his pocket."

"Oh," said Hawke quietly. "Have you anything to say, Mr Mordaunt?"

"Nothing that is any concern of yours," flashed Mordaunt.

"But it is of Mr Willington's," said Hawke.

### The Engagement.

**M**ORDAUNT'S eyes blazed, but he swung round on his heel.

"Oh, all right, confound you! Let's get it over."

They crowded into Willington's study. Deane and Peggy were there. Willington was saying:

"I am really delighted, Deane, and I only wish that I was less troubled by the robbery, so that I could be more single-minded with my congratulations." He looked up with surprise as the others entered and said quietly: "This is a full day, gentlemen. Peggy has just told me that she has become engaged."

"Congratulations," said Hawke. And then deliberately:

"Aren't you going to extend your good wishes, Mr Mordaunt?"

Mordaunt glared at him.

"You know what I've come for. I

## The Crusted Snow

knew all about the engagement earlier in the evening. Now let's get this over. Hawke's snooping young friend caught me with your money."

"Good—good heavens!" gasped Willingdon.

"You!" exclaimed Peggy.

"Where are the jewels?" demanded Willingdon, and then with an effort.

"Just a moment, Hawke. I know you will respect my wishes. This comes as a considerable blow, but provided the money and jewels are returned I shall make no charge."

### Mordaunt Confesses.

"**B**EFORE we settle that," said Hawke, "I have one or two observations to make. We are assuming that the same man had the jewels and notes, and also that he stole them in the first place. Now I have carried out an experiment with a piece of ice from a boot. I know, because of the way in which a piece melted in this room, that the thief was at the safe some twenty-five minutes before the discovery of the theft. A careful checking of the time proves that none of the A.R.P. people were here then. In fact, only Mr Mordaunt or Mr Deane were here."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Willingdon. "What an ingenious idea! But I don't see how it affects the issue."

Mordaunt's face was set and stern as he said, "Nor do I. I'll confess that I took all the stuff. I knew where the keys were kept, and thought I could get away with it by blaming someone, since so many people were here. But—well, it's all over. Are you sure you're not going to give me in charge, Willingdon?"

"Before that, another thing," said Hawke. "Where are the jewels, Mordaunt?"

"When I realised the game was up I threw them away in the snow," said Mordaunt. "I tried to hide the money."

"Did you?" asked Hawke. "I don't think so. Moreover, I think your confession and your behaviour is nothing more than a strange, quixotic gesture! You didn't take the jewels, but you know who did. The thief, you learned, had won the hand of the woman you love. For her sake, because you think only the thief can make her happy, you have done this."

### The Thief Revealed!

**M**ORDAUNT looked flabbergasted. Deane had lost all vestige of colour and said thickly:

"That's a vicious lie, Hawke!"

"No, it isn't," flashed Hawke. "And I'll tell you what made me first suspect you. You dressed in civilian clothes on the pretext of making it pleasanter for the civil defence workers. I thought you the last man to be so considerate for others and looked for another reason. Your uniform was too conspicuous and you needed to change it, but I will guarantee the jewels are in your pockets."

Deane was edging towards the door, but Tommy reached it first. Peggy stepped slowly to Mordaunt's side.

"Did you really do that for me, Jim?"

Mordaunt spoke awkwardly.

"All—all I wanted was to make you happy, Peggy. I saw Deane with the jewels. He put the notes in the pocket of his army greatcoat in the hall. He is still carrying the jewels on him. I got the notes and proposed to hide them, and later make him put the jewels with them, so that all of it would be found."

Willingdon said quietly:

"Return the jewels, Deane, and then leave my house. Hawke, I really can't thank you enough."

"Nor can I," said Peggy Willingdon. "You've helped me to see how nearly I made a tragic mistake."

And her hand clasped Mordaunt's.

# THE CASE OF

# The Artist's Ink



RARELY did Dixon Hawke see his young assistant bereft of words, and he smiled to himself as he saw Tommy Burke standing on the landing near his study door.

With Tommy was an extremely pretty girl, no more than nineteen or twenty, and she was gripping Tommy's hand tightly between her own.

"Mr Hawke—you can help me, you must! I'm absolutely depending on you to save Bill."

Lovely blue eyes stared intently into Tommy's, and Hawke saw that the girl was at a high pitch of tension.

"Er——" began Tommy. "But—I mean——"

"Supposing you come into my study?" asked Dixon Hawke quietly. "You're Miss Raymond, aren't you? You telephoned for an appointment an hour ago."

"That's—that's right." The girl released her grip, and looked at Hawke in surprise. "But—who are you?"

"It's a slight case of mistaken

identity," smiled Hawke. "I'm Dixon Hawke and this is my assistant."

He ushered Mary Raymond into the study, and Tommy retired to his desk, where he prepared to take notes. It was difficult to concentrate on that job; the girl was so lovely, and, despite her obvious anxiety, so full of life.

"I'm terribly sorry," she said after an obvious effort to regain her self-control. "I should have known, of course, that you wouldn't be so young. I——"

"Supposing you tell me all about your 'Bill'?" interposed Hawke.

"Yes, I will. He's under arrest—he's at the police station now. He's been charged with forging a cheque—my uncle's cheque, and I'm quite sure he didn't do it!"

"Why are you sure?" asked Hawke very reasonably.

"He just couldn't do a thing like that!" she said tensely. "He may have been hard up, but theft or forgery would be beyond him. I'm positive of it! So is my uncle. If we'd thought Bill had anything to do with it there would never have been a case for the police. I—oh, I know he didn't do it! He's told me so."

"I see," said Dixon Hawke quietly. Clearly the girl was convinced in her own mind that her Bill had committed no crime, but certainly she had offered nothing in the way of evidence.

## Mary Raymond's "Bill."

HAWKE asked further questions, and it grew quickly obvious that Mary Raymond's only reason for not believing the police charge against Bill—whose other name was Brent—was her faith in her fiancé.

They had been engaged, she said, for three months. Bill was twenty-four, but had not gone into any of the services because of a minor infirmity in his left leg.

He had worked for Mary's uncle, David Raymond, for two years, as private secretary. In his spare time he drew cartoons and did pen-and-ink drawings.

A week before, there had been trouble over a cheque for two hundred pounds. The bank had queried the signature, and David Raymond had declared at once that it was a forgery. Payment, however, had been made by then, and the bank called in the police immediately. After six days of investigation, Bill Brent had been charged with the forgery.

That was all Mary Raymond knew.

"I'm absolutely positive he didn't forge the signature," she said. "Please—please look into it, Mr Hawke. The police won't listen to me, and all the time Matthews is laughing up his sleeve, he—"

She stopped short, mentioning the man Matthews for the first time, and

looking then as if she wished she had not.

"Who is Matthews?" Hawke asked swiftly.

"I—I shouldn't have mentioned him," said Mary. "He's my uncle's companion, and——" she broke off. "I wish I hadn't named him, Mr Hawke. I don't want to prejudice you or anyone else against him. Will you please take up the case!"

"Yes, Miss Raymond. Mind you, I don't promise to clear your fiancé. But if he didn't forge the cheque, then I think I can find who did. Get your hat, Tommy—we'll go over to the police station."

"Wouldn't it be better to come and see my uncle?" asked Mary quickly.

"Not until I've seen Bill," said Hawke. "You go straight back home, Miss Raymond, say nothing at all, and wait for me. I hope to be there in little more than an hour."

The girl went immediately, after expressing her gratitude. Hawke stood by the window, watching her walk along Dover Street. Tommy also watched and said wonderingly:

"Why so interested in her, gov'nor? I'm jolly glad you're going to help her, but it looks pretty plain against Bill Brent, doesn't it? If he's a black-and-white artist, he's clever with a pen, and just the type for a forgery job. And she admitted he was in need of money."

"I'm interested in her because I think it will break her heart if her Bill goes to prison," said Hawke crisply. "And I want to be sure that the police have made no mistake this time. It's just possible that someone followed her here—if this man Matthews, or anyone else, did commit the crime, and knew that Mary was going to get further advice, he would be interested."

"There's someone standing on the other side of the road," said Hawke. "Do you see him—a middle-aged man, dressed in dark grey? He might have nothing to do with this, but it's a peculiar place to stand, I think. I'm going to the Marylebone Station,

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Tommy. You follow, after a brief interval. If that man does show interest in me, keep on his trail, and report where he goes. You'd better be waiting near the Raymonds' house—you made a note of the address, of course!"

"Yes," said Tommy promptly, and a few minutes later Hawke left the flat. Tommy watched from a downstairs window, and to his excitement, saw the man in grey move off after his chief.

### A Warning.

WITH a thrill of excitement, Tommy followed in his turn. Hawke had deliberately decided to walk, and thus Tommy had little difficulty in keeping Hawke's shadow under observation.

So someone had followed Mary Raymond.

That opened out the possibility that her faith in Bill Brent was justified. Tommy immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was, and wondered where the chase would lead him.

He did not have long to wait.

After Hawke turned into the police station, the other man walked slowly towards the Edgeware Road, then turned down a side street, and in a few minutes reached No. 8, The Grove. That was the address of Mary Raymond and her uncle. Tommy's eyes were gleaming when he saw the man let himself in with a key. It would be Matthews, of course—he had no doubt of that.

Tommy walked to the end of the street.

A few minutes afterwards Mary Raymond went into the house.

"They'll be all there together when the gov'nor arrives," thought Tommy. "I hope he gets something out of the police. I—oh, I'm sorry!" He was standing in the middle of the pavement, and someone had hanged into him. As he stepped aside he looked round—and he was startled to see the man in the grey suit.

The other stopped and looked at him crookedly.

"You're sorry, are you? You'll be a mighty sight sorer if you don't mind your own business. What have you been following me about for?"

Tommy lied immediately; bluff was his only weapon.

"I've done nothing of the kind!"

"Oh, yes, you have. I saw you all the way, young feller-me-lad, and I don't like being followed. I went in at the front door and came out of the back, to catch you napping. Mind your own business, understand!" He raised a hand sharply, as if to strike Tommy, and the youngster immediately clenched his fist.

"Oh, you feel like a fight, do you?" snapped the other and he closed in.

Tommy was deceived by a feint to the chin, and shaken badly by a punch to the stomach. In a flash he realised that this man was an experienced boxer. He tightened his lips, and put all he knew into countering the other's blows, but a vicious right took him on the point of the jaw. He staggered back against some railings, and there was a vague blur in front of his eyes.

Dimly he heard the other's words.

"Tell your boss to keep away from me, see! If he doesn't, you'll both get a worse dose than this one!" He sneered the last words, and then stopped abruptly. Tommy heard heavy footsteps, then lighter ones. The shadowy figure of the man in grey disappeared and a policeman took his place.

Tommy declared that he did not know his assailant; he thought it wiser, since Hawke would soon be along. His head was still in a whirl, and his chin was painful, but inwardly he was filled with a fierce excitement. Matthews—it was surely Matthews—had given himself away completely.

The policeman, after taking notes, went on.

Tommy waited for half an hour.



# The Artist's Ink

Meanwhile Hawke was with the police. At the Marylebone station, Inspector Blair interviewed him affably enough, and when he broached the subject of the forgery, laughed a little.

## The Incriminating Ink.

**I**F you hope to clear Brent, you're on the wrong horse," Blair said. "We've a cut and dried case against him. The cheque was forged quite obviously—the money, or most of it, was found at his lodgings—the ink used for the forgery was the same as he uses for his cartoons and drawings—and above all, he was heavily in debt. Add those up, Hawke, and you'll find they come to 'guilty'!"

Hawke smiled a little.

"I'm not going to argue about that yet, at all events! He earns a pretty good salary, doesn't he? Why should he get into debt?"

Blair frowned at that.

"We-ell—I don't blame him for that. He's got two young sisters evacuated to the country, and one of them's had a serious illness. They're no parents, and it's cost him a pretty penny. If he'd gone to David Raymond in the first place he would have been all right, though. He won't get a long sentence, because of the circumstances, and he might even get off. Raymond is going to offer to re-employ him, I think."

"H'm. Raymond sounds a decent fellow. Is there anyone else at the place who might have played any part?"

Blair pursed his lips.

"Well, there's a companion fellow—a man named Matthews. He used to be a middle-weight boxing champion, but he's got a soft job with Raymond. I would have had Brent earlier, only I concentrated on Matthews. He's absolutely in the clear, though."

"Why are you so sure?"

"Because he cut his fingers ten days

ago, and couldn't have used a pen at or about the time the cheque was forged. I had the fingers medically examined. They're all right now, but a week ago he couldn't have drawn a circle, let alone forge a signature!"

"Oh," said Dixon Hawke thoughtfully. "That's interesting, Blair."

"It's convincing, too," said Blair. "Don't tell me he could have forged the cheque and then cut his fingers to give himself an alibi—I'd seen that possibility! The cheque was not taken from the cheque book until last Tuesday—just a week ago. That was the day David Raymond last wrote a cheque, and the forged one is the next, after Raymond's genuine one. Matthews is quite in the clear. I know you won't be satisfied until you've checked it all yourself, though! Do you want to see young Brent?"

Hawke shook his head.

"No, not yet at all events. I think I've enough to work on. He's a fairly intelligent fellow!"

"Yes—as a matter of fact, I rather like him. He's more to be pitied than blamed. But crime's crime!"

"And evidence is evidence," said Hawke. "On the evidence you have, you had to arrest him, of course. But looked at from another way, it could declare him innocent, not guilty."

Blair stared in amazement.

"What a lot of nonsense! Explain yourself, Hawke."

"Later," smiled Hawke. "There isn't time now. Just think it over, Blair. I'm going to see Raymond and Matthews."

"You've got some idea in that head of yours, and I'm coming with you," said Blair sharply. "But I think you're all mixed up."

"We'll see," said Hawke cryptically.

Twenty minutes later he saw Tommy, and with Blair heard the youngster's statement. Blair exclaimed in amazement when he heard Tommy's description of his assailant.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"That's Matthews all right! Why, the man must be a fool! It looks as if you've got something after all, Hawke."

"It's more than likely, but Matthews's behaviour takes some explaining. However, the next half-hour should do all that's necessary. Watch Matthews closely all the time, you two."

"If I get another chance at him, I'll make him wish he'd kept his hands to himself!" exclaimed Tommy.

### Case Of "Frequent Mistakes."

INSIDE No. 8, The Grove, Matthews, Mary Raymond, and her uncle were in the owner's study. The uncle was a tall, grey-haired man, who regarded Inspector Blair in obvious surprise. Matthews was the first to speak, however. He pointed a finger at Tommy.

"There's the young lout! He positively flung himself at me when I was walking along the road. Inspector, I charge him with assault!"

Tommy was too taken aback to speak.

David Raymond looked from one to another in apparent bewilderment.

"This is a remarkable business, gentlemen. Matthews tells me that a young man made a deliberate and violent assault on him. Luckily Matthews is able to look after himself. But—what is the assailant doing here? Are you sure this is the young man, Matthews?"

"Positive!" Matthews declared.

"I've heard a different story," said Blair. "Mr Raymond, it's my firm opinion that this young man's word can be taken as the truth. Moreover, your niece went to Dixon Hawke to ask his help for her fiancé. Matthews followed her, and afterwards followed Hawke. Tommy Burke in turn followed him, and to me it seems a remarkable thing that Matthews chose to attack him, and to threaten him if he didn't mind his own business."

Raymond was apparently mystified. "But—but I don't understand! Are you inferring that Matthews, not Brent, forged the cheque?" he said, heatedly.

Hawke spoke for the first time.

"Before we let this develop into a wild argument, may I see the cheque concerned? You've got it, Blair!"

Blair had, of course, and it was put on the desk. Blair and Raymond pointed to the obvious flaws in the signature, compared with those on other cheques.

"It was done in a different ink, too," explained Blair.

"Yes, Indian ink—the same as Brent uses for his drawings," added Matthews quickly.

"Brent's the only man who could have done it," asserted the ex-boxer.

"It—it can't be true!" exclaimed Mary Raymond.

Her uncle looked at her pityingly.

"It must be so hard for you, my dear. If only Bill had been wise enough to come to me with his troubles, I would have helped him, difficult though it is in these days. Money isn't easy to come by, and I can ill afford to lose two hundred pounds. But had I suspected the truth, the case would never have gone so far."

"If I'd dreamed of it, I would have asked you for the money out of my account," said Mary Raymond. "I know you haven't a big income, Uncle, but I've plenty—"

"It's a case of frequent mistakes," broke in Raymond. "Inspector, isn't there any way the charge can be withdrawn?"

"The bank certainly won't withdraw it," said Blair.

"I—I see. Well—"

"Just a moment," said Dixon Hawke grimly. "It is a case of frequent mistakes, as you say, Mr Raymond. You've made one that I can't miss. You're not wealthy, but you control your niece's money, is that it?"

"Yes, but—"

"If she were married the money would not be under your control!"

## The Artist's Ink

"That is so, but what has it to do with this affair!"

"A great deal," said Hawke grimly. "I wanted just that missing piece of evidence! Matthews draws attention to himself when the possibility that Brent will be cleared shows itself. Yet Matthews couldn't have forged the cheque."

"Too true, I couldn't!" shouted Matthews.

"But that in itself isn't proof that Brent did," said Hawke. "Inspector Blair, you asked me to explain why the evidence could speak for Brent as well as against him. Here is the explanation. He's a clever youngster—but no one who's clever would use his own drawing ink for a forgery, ink no one else uses. He wouldn't keep the money in his own room. And, above all, if he's a clever man with a pen, and all admit that he is, he would never do a careless and obvious forgery. I claim that is all evidence for Brent."

Raymond stared at Dixon Hawke.

"I'm delighted to hear you say so. But who——"

"From the first I wondered whether there could be any reason why you should want to stop the marriage!" interrupted Hawke. "Obviously you would want to—you're not well off, and you would lose control of your niece's money once she was married. So a clever scheme was worked out. The cheque was presented, an 'obvious' forgery, and cleared through the bank."

"Matthews was a likely suspect—so his hands were injured beforehand to make him quite safe. If suspicion turned to you, David Raymond, Matthews planned to draw attention away from you—you arranged that with him! He felt quite safe—the police would think he had forged the cheque, but they could get no proof! You wanted to be sure of only one thing—to keep yourself safe if the charge against Brent failed; Matthews took the risks. You pre-

tended to be reluctant about the charge, moreover, cleverly waiting for the hank to make it. You plotted the ruin of a young man's life, and of your niece's happiness!"

"It—it's ridiculous!" Raymond was trembling from head to foot. "The cheque was forged—everyone says so. I couldn't forge my own signature!"

"That's what you relied on to keep yourself absolutely safe!" flashed Hawke. "But from the start the obvious nature of the forgery appeared strange to me, and I wondered if the cheque lied—whether it was a forgery, or whether actually you had signed it. With that idea, I sought for a reason why you should want Brent safely out of the way. You've given your own reason and condemned yourself. Matthews—" Hawke turned now to the ex-boxer—"he paid you to attack Tommy, didn't he? You reported that Tommy had followed you, and Raymond told you to go out the back way and attack him. He pointed out that you were quite safe and he paid you well!"

"Yes, the swine, he did! He's already robbed Mary of a tidy sum—he had to stop the marriage! He told me he'd put me in the clear. Why, you——"

The boxer launched himself at Raymond, but Tommy was in the way—and Tommy with great gusto drove a pile-driver to the boxer's chin which almost lifted him off his feet. Afterwards, Raymond broke down and admitted being desperate at the thought of his niece's marriage, and the inevitable disclosure about the shortage in his niece's accounts.

Later, Hawke said to Tommy: "Well, Mary will be saddened by her uncle's trickery, but her friend Bill will make up for that. Raymond and Matthews will get tidy sentences for their conspiracy—and you're happy now that you've got your own hack on Matthews! There's nothing more to be said, old son!"

# THE CASE OF

# The Officer's Stars



**O**PPPOSITE Dixon Hawke sat a white-haired, aristocratic-looking man, his grey eyes full of sadness.

In one corner, at his desk, Tommy was busy making notes of the conversation.

The old man had called fifteen minutes before, and the talk was nearly finished now.

"And so, Mr Hawke, I can only ask you to investigate, to find if there is the slightest possibility of a mistake. It will break my wife's heart if—if our son is imprisoned."

Hawke nodded slowly.

"I can quite understand your feelings, Mr Brandon. Let me just run through the main points of the story. Your son came home on leave on Monday—two days ago. He was invited, with you and Mrs Brandon, to a small private party at a house near Guildford—The Lodge, Denham. There were ten people at the party, of whom four—including you and your wife—took no part in a game called 'Murders,' which was played in darkened rooms. During it the 'victim' was heard to scream,

and when the lights went up it was found that she was unconscious, and a rope of pearls had been stolen from her neck."

"That—that is right."

"All the members of the party were friends. Evidence was difficult because of the darkness, but three people, close friends of your son's, testified to the fact that he had been in a room with the victim, because they had brushed against him, and were sure he was wearing a uniform. Your son was the only man in the house wearing a uniform."

"That is quite right, yes."

"The pearls were found in your son's uniform pocket, although he swore that he had not been in the room where the attack was made and the robbery staged."

Brandon pressed a hand against his forehead.

"They are the facts, Mr Hawke. They appear incoscapable. My son, Arnold, is short of money, also. Unfor-

## The Officer's Stars

unately I am unable to keep him in funds, and army pay is too small for his requirements. If I admit the truth, it is that I think he has been a young fool. He has always been reckless. I must admit that only at his mother's earnest appeal have I come to see you."

"I see," said Hawke. "Leave it with me, Mr Brandon, and I will visit Guildford to-day and report to you just as quickly as possible."

### The Burglars In Uniform.

**T**WENTY minutes later, when Hawke and Tommy were together, Hawke pulled a wry face.

"There is at least one point that's curious."

"What's that?" demanded Tommy.

"The uniform. True, the sense of touch would reveal a uniform reasonably well—I don't doubt the evidence as far as it goes. But would Arnold Brandon tuck the pearls into his pocket? And, even more important, does he know anyone who could dispose of them? In short, has he been just a young fool, a reckless spendthrift, or has he really been in bad company?"

Hawke was sorting out some papers on his desk, and he picked up a cutting which he had taken from the Daily Courier. "That's one angle, the personal one. Here's another—the Courier reports a series of small country house burglaries in the Home Counties. I think I'll find whether the Yard knows anything about them."

"Hang it, they're cat-burglaries! I read about them this morning!" exclaimed Tommy.

"I know—but it's a coincidence worth following up," said Dixon Hawke.

Tommy was not surprised when Hawke returned, an hour later—just before lunch-time—with some news of interest.

"We'll have some sandwiches cut, and eat them on the way down to Guildford," Hawke declared. "The Yard

have given me an introduction to Inspector Wilmot, who's in charge of our case and of the other burglaries in the Surrey area."

"Does the Yard think they might be connected?"

"They do!" said Hawke grimly. "What's more, they think that Arnold Brandon may have taken part in them. The only single fact emerging from the investigations into the cat-burglaries is that the burglars were always in uniform."

Hawke's quick question about Arnold Brandon's ability—or otherwise—to sell the pearls certainly had justification!

As they neared the Surrey town, Tommy said:

"Do you think Brandon is connected with the other crimes?"

"It's a bit early to say yet. But if I had to give an opinion I'd say no, quite definitely."

"Why?" demanded Tommy.

"Try to work it out for yourself," said Hawke. "Here's the station—we'll see Wilmot and Brandon."

### The Scene Of The Crime.

**W**ILMOT, a heavily-built, slow-speaking country man, had a pair of shrewd grey eyes which bespoke a quick intelligence. He was glad to co-operate with Hawke, and admitted that half-a-dozen cat-burglaries had given him some anxiety. The burglary at The Lodge, moreover, had peculiar features. There was evidence of a ladder placed against a wall, and of an attempt to interfere with a window. Whether it had been opened or not was not known.

"It's like this, Hawke," said Wilmot. "In these days of black-outs, burglary is no easy job. Frames or heavy curtains pinned together to make sure no chink of light escapes make it difficult. My theory has always been that the thief has had an accomplice inside the house."

"It could be," agreed Hawke. "How

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does Brandon fit in—is he stationed nearby?"

"Yes—within an hour's run of all the burgled houses. He has had many evenings off, too—although he doesn't spend them with his parents. He goes round visiting friends in the district, and after some trouble I've established the fact that he has been in five of the six burgled houses on the nights of the crimes!"

Hawke widened his eyes.

"Have you, by Jove! That's good work. What about these other witnesses and the girl who was robbed?"

"They're all members of good county families—absolutely beyond reproach, Mr Hawke. I don't think there's a ghost of a chance that they're lying."

"Brandon comes from an equally good family, surely?"

"Oh, yes, that's true. But he's always run wild—gambled a small fortune away before the war, and it's generally known he was in debt everywhere."

"Arnold Brandon certainly seems unpopular," reflected Dixon Hawke quietly. "I'd rather like to see the woman, or girl, who was robbed. And if it would be possible to see her in the house and the actual room where the crime took place, it would help."

"That's quite easy," said Wilmot. "She's staying at The Lodge, and she'll certainly be there. I'll just telephone to make sure it's convenient."

"No, don't do that," said Hawke. "Let's risk finding her away from the house, and make the visit a complete surprise."

Wilmot widened his eyes, but made no objection.

Little more than half an hour afterwards Dixon Hawke pulled into the drive of a large, Georgian mansion, and, with Wilmot and Tommy, was immediately taken into a pleasant room on the first floor.

There Irene Gay, the girl who had lost the pearls, greeted them pleasantly and affably. The owner of the house,

a Colonel John Defoe, was also with the party.

Hawke was impressed by Irene's manner. She told her story well and straightforwardly.

She had been hiding in the room when someone had come in. He had approached her, and she had put out a hand, touched his shoulder, and felt the stars, which told her it was Arnold Brandon.

Next moment the man's fingers had tightened about her throat, and she had been unable to scream. She then lost consciousness, coming round later to find the pearls missing.

"How valuable were they?" asked Hawke.

"They were worth about five thousand pounds."

"By George!" exclaimed Tommy. "That's some haul, gov'nor!"

### Marks At The Window.

"HARDLY a haul, young man," said Colonel Defoe, a short, square-shouldered man with a neatly-clipped grey moustache. His weatherbeaten face and clear blue eyes suggested a man who had lived out of doors. "The pearls were not stolen after all—at least they were found before they left the house. I suppose young Brandon could have sold them again—it seems an odd thing for him to steal. They aren't easily negotiable, surely?"

"Not normally," said Wilmot, "but if Brandon was one of several people, organised by a central leader, it would be a different matter."

The girl and Defoe stared at the inspector.

"What an idea!" exclaimed Defoe. "Brandon may be a young fool, but—I say, Inspector, I've just realised something that's rather unpleasant. Brandon was at some of the other houses on the nights of the crimes, wasn't he?"

"We'd already discovered that, sir," said Wilmot. "Well, Mr Hawke, is

## The Officer's Stars



Hawke leapt desperately to one side, as the car shot towards him.

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there anything else you'd like to see?"

"Yes—the marks at the window," said Hawke.

He examined them, seeing that there were scratches on the window-sill, as if a ladder, or something hard, had been scraped against it. He spent five minutes examining the spot, and then went downstairs. Wilnot was in the hall with the colonel. Dixon Hawke called Tommy aside and said:

"A job for you, old son. Watch The Lodge until you hear from me again—it may be after dark. There's plenty of common-land opposite, and you can hide yourself well."

"Why—do you suspect the girl?" exclaimed Tommy.

"I'd like to know whether she goes out, and who comes in to see her," said Hawke. "There's a slab of chocolate in the car that you can use for iron rations. When we're about a ten minutes' walk from The Lodge say you'd like to take a stroll back into Guildford and I'll put you down. We don't want Wilnot to know what we're doing yet."

### Brandon's Love Affair.

TOMMY did as he was told, and thus Hawke and Wilnot reached Guildford without him. Wilnot sent for the prisoner, and Arnold Brandon came into the inspector's office.

Brandon was a tall, good-looking youngster, red-eyed through lack of sleep and obviously greatly worried.

"Well, what is it now?" he demanded roughly. "Aren't you satisfied with washing all my dirty linen in public without having periodic interrogations? I didn't attack Irene, and I didn't take the pearls. That's all I'm going to say."

Hawke spoke quietly and reassuringly.

"I shouldn't be too definite, Lieutenant—by talking more freely you may help yourself as easily as do your

self damage. If you are innocent, that is."

"I am—I know nothing about it!"

"Then let me assume that you're telling the truth," smiled Hawke.

"Why did you go to The Lodge when on leave?"

"I was invited."

"Was there any special attraction?"

"Yes—Irene was there. I don't see why you should be interested, and she had nothing to do with it—she was robbed, anyhow."

"I see. You're interested in Miss Irene Gay?"

Brandon looked angry.

"That's an impertinence! Irene won't give me a chance, I know that, but——" He hesitated, as if realising that he was talking too freely, and then went on in a rather sullen voice: "All right, I'm in love with her. I'd rather attend a party where she's about than be anywhere else."

"And that's why you do a lot of visiting when you can get away, instead of spending the time at your home?"

Brandon coloured at that.

"Yes, it is. Sometimes I feel I'm not fair to the old folk, but—well, a fellow looks for younger company."

"I see," said Hawke quietly. "Thank you, Lieutenant. And don't be too surprised if there is good news for you in the near future."

After Brandon had gone, Wilnot stared at Hawke in astonishment.

"Why on earth did you give him any hope? You've found nothing that I haven't found, Mr Hawke!"

"I think I've seen something that you've missed," said Dixon Hawke, "and I hope to have proof of it later in the day, Inspector. Meanwhile I'm going to try to work it out on my own."

Actually Hawke drove back towards The Lodge, and parked the car half a mile away. Then he walked over the gorse-covered common-land, and after ten minutes saw Tommy watching the big house. Tommy jumped up in surprise, then looked relieved when he saw Hawke.



## The Officer's Stars

"You scared me, gov'nor! I don't know why it is, but I've got the jitters here! Two men have gone in—they called about half an hour after you'd left. And I thought I recognised one of them—do you remember Jerry the Lag? He was in jail once——"

Hawke's eyes were bright.

"Do I remember him! Of course I do—he was a go-between for thieves and fences. Got to the nearest telephone and have Wilnot come here at once with some men. I——"

He broke off abruptly, for a car engine sounded near The Lodge, and Hawke saw a small car coming down the drive.

"That's the car Jerry came in, gov'nor!"

"Then we're going into action," said Dixon Hawke promptly. "I'll try to delay him—you hurry back for the car."

### The Lag Confesses.

TOMMY was reluctant to go off to the big car, which was in sight, but he obeyed, while Hawke hurried to the road. The small car came along, and he stepped into the roadway with a hand raised. He knew that was the testing time.

If the car stopped, it would suggest that he was not recognised, although certainly the little, wizened-faced man driving was known to Hawke. Tommy was right—it was Jerry the Lag!

And he recognised Hawke.

At first he slowed down, then he trod on the accelerator, and Hawke saw the car leaping towards him. The slowing down had deceived him, and for a split second he was afraid he would be too late. He leapt desperately to one side, and he felt the wind of the car as he went sprawling.

Meanwhile Tommy had run for the big car, and was at the wheel when Hawke fell. He soon got it moving, and Hawke was on his feet again as it drew alongside. Tommy gaped at his dis-

hevelled appearance, but Hawke snapped:

"Drive on—after him! I'm all right!"

He leapt into the car before it had stopped and climbed into his seat while it gathered speed again. For fifteen minutes Tommy sent the big car hurtling along the road, until they drew within sight of Jerry the Lag's car. The driver was looking over his shoulder, and clearly he was trying desperately to increase his lead. But Tommy drove grimly, and Hawke said:

"Force him into the side of the road, Tommy."

Yard by yard they gained on Jerry, and then Tommy found an extra bit of speed. The big car cut in front of the smaller one, forcing it to turn into the hedge.

There was a squealing of tyres on the road, of brakes—and then a crash as the small car went into the hedge. For a moment it looked as if it would overturn, but it righted itself as Tommy and Hawke reached it.

Jerry the Lag, frightened more than he was hurt, stared into Hawke's grim eyes.

"I—I ain't done nothing, mister! I swear——"

"Don't be a fool," snapped Hawke. "You've collected some jewels from The Lodge for selling."

The ex-convict's mouth dropped open.

"How—how did you know?"

"Then it's true!" flashed Hawke triumphantly. "Colonel Defoe gave them to you, didn't he? You've done other jobs for him!"

"Y—yes, mister! But how did you know?"

"Never mind that now," said Hawke, and then to Tommy, "A dull job for you, old son—watch this man until the police arrive. I'm going to The Lodge in a hurry."

"But—Defoe!" exclaimed Tommy. "I thought you suspected the girl!"

"I'll talk about that later," said Hawke.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Less than an hour afterwards, Hawke and Wilmot were driving from Guildford to The Lodge. Another police car was following; Wilmot was taking no chances that Defoe would escape. He, too, had been astounded at the discovery, and Hawke was explaining:

"You presumed Brandon's guilt—I presumed his innocence. The vital factor was his shortage of money. If he had played a part in all these burglaries, he would have had money to burn."

"I didn't think of that!"

"It isn't too apparent," admitted Hawke. "Anyhow, I assumed it was someone else. The other burglaries took place at houses where Brandon was visiting—and he always visited them because the girl was there. Remember, a uniform was always mentioned, and I began to see how Brandon could be trapped."

"I reasoned that if someone who knew he was in love with Irene arranged to burgle the houses where she was visiting, Brandon would always be a suspect. The robberies were outside jobs—cat-burglaries, in short. I examined the window-sill at The Lodge, where the ladder presumably rested. But those marks were made from inside the house! Had a ladder been rested there to make the marks, there would have been scratches on the wall below and at the sides—a ladder never goes straight into position."

"Those additional scratches were missing, so I was sure this one was completely an inside job. I believed Brandon innocent so I looked for another crook. Irene Gay was a possible, but it seemed to me like a man's work."

### "A Good Friend."

"THIS—this is pretty powerful deduction!" exclaimed Wilmot.

"It fits the facts," said Hawke.

"Well, here was a burglary—or robbery—which went wrong. It was discovered

before the jewels could be hidden, and it was obviously an inside job. The pearls were slipped into Brandon's pocket—a man in uniform had always been seen about the time of the crimes. Doubtless Defoe knew of that, and carefully planned to have Brandon convicted if there was any trouble. But Defoe made one big mistake, or rather, three in one. He corrected Tommy quickly when Tommy called it a 'haul.' He showed himself familiar with the fact that a fence would be needed for stolen pearls. And he jumped in quickly to say that Brandon had been at some of the other houses. The first two were suspicious, the third confirmed my suspicions, for Defoe was supposed to be a good friend of Brandon's and no friend would have given that information to the police."

Wilmot drew a deep breath.

"It's superb work, Mr Hawke! But without the man—Jerry the Leg, did you call him—how could you have found proof against Colonel Defoe?"

"I couldn't," said Hawke with a smile. "I paid a lot of attention to that window, so that Defoe would get worried for fear suspicion of a trick developed. I was quite sure that if he had any stolen goods in the house, he would get rid of them quickly. He did—or he tried to! Well, here we are—"

Colonel Defoe was stunned at his discovery, but made little effort to deny that he was the culprit. Knowing of Jerry the Leg's capture, he must have realised there was no escape.

On the way back to London, Tommy said:

"A rattling smart job, guv'nor, but I don't understand who did the job at The Lodge. If the man did have a uniform on—"

Hawke smiled.

"That was the thing which put the police wrong, old son. The thief—Defoe—needed only to wear a heavy belt, and to fasten to his shoulders something that felt like officer's stars. From the first I distrusted the uniform evidence!"

## THE CASE OF

# The Wicked Uncle



**I** FIND it everywhere," said the old man quietly.

"In my food and drink. Even on the gummed flaps of the envelopes on my desk. Poison, Mr Hawke! Affairs have reached such a pitch that I dare eat nothing at home, but have to take all my meals here alone."

Strange words to hear in the smoking-room of a famous London club, and made still stranger by the man who spoke them. Sir David Magnoll, retired president of a big transport firm, was about as shrewd and level-headed as any business man to be found in the City of London.

"If somebody is trying to murder you, Sir David, why not go to the police?" asked Dixon Hawke.

Sir David looked doubtfully at the private detective, and hesitated for a moment.

"The trouble is," he admitted at last, "that the evidence of my own eyes and ears is forcing me to believe the last thing that I want to believe. The reason that I am seeking your help, Mr Hawke, instead of going to the police, is that the evidence points to my niece as the poisoner and I want you to prove that evidence to be all wrong."

Sir David sighed, passing a hand wearily across his eyes.

"And yet, Mr Hawke," he added, "I am afraid that in asking you to disprove the evidence I am asking you to perform a miracle.

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"I had better begin at the beginning," he continued, "and tell you about Claire. My brother and his wife are both dead, and the poor girl had a terrible time for some months after their death, for her father died in poverty and in debt, having been too proud to turn to me for help in his time of need.

"He was my only brother, and his wife was my playmate in childhood, but they cut adrift from the family years ago, and I had completely lost touch with them. It was only when Claire was in hospital, after being rescued from an attempt to take her own life in the river, that her relationship to me was discovered and the police communicated with me.

"I did not even know that I had a niece, but I took her into my home at once, and I can truthfully say that I have done all in my power to make her happy once more, and to win her confidence. I feel responsible for what her parents suffered. If only I had insisted in keeping in touch with them, I could have helped them. And I want to make up for that to their daughter.

"But the child—she is nineteen—has suffered so much that I fear nothing will wipe the bitterness from her mind. She seems to have made up her mind to hate me. She makes no bones about it. She tells people she hates me.

"Six weeks ago a chemist rang me up in the evening. My niece had called at his shop to buy poison to kill rats. He was suspicious and decided to phone the address she gave because of the extreme agitation of the young lady. Well, of course, I said it was all right, although I have never seen a rat in our house, and the servants would have dealt with them, anyway.

"When Claire returned I made a joke about it, but she flared up and abused me, making the most extraordinary accusations. Unfortunately some friends were there at the time and overheard what she said. They were horrified and suggested that a doctor ought to examine Claire, so I

arranged for her to see Jewett, the brain specialist, but she refused to keep the appointment.

"Two days later I tasted something odd in my tea, and was taken violently ill directly after. To cut a long story short, the doctor's verdict was that I had narrowly escaped arsenical poisoning. Since then I have watched my niece's actions, and have had samples of food and drink analysed. Hawke, here is the analyst's report—almost every sample has contained poison!"

Sir David paused again, while Hawke studied the report; then the old man abruptly brought his fist down on the arm of his chair.

"And yet I refuse to believe it!" he insisted. "I cannot believe that Claire is guilty. Some enemy is at the back of this, and is trying to fasten his crime on her. That is what I want you to prove."

Hawke nodded slowly, folding the reports and putting them in his pocket.

"I had better come and stay at your house for a few days, Sir David," said the detective.

### The Scared Niece.

**D**IXON HAWKE and his young assistant, Tommy Burke, arrived at the Magnoll home the following morning. There they found Claire Magnoll with her uncle.

She was small and delicate, with troubled, scared eyes that seemed too big for her pale face.

She looked like a child in a perpetual nightmare, frightened of everything around her, and in the days that followed, Tommy discovered that she spent most of her time in her own room, and often he heard her sobbing hysterically when he listened at the door.

And yet Sir David was kindness itself to her. He fussed over her like a hen over its only chick, always seeking some way of ransoming her from this strange bitter sorrow of hers.

# The Wicked Uncle

"It would be better if he dealt with her firmly in a good old-fashioned way, or sent her away to where they would know how to deal with her tantrums," snapped Sir David's doctor, having been called in on the night of the detective's arrival to cope with an attack of screaming hysterics that the girl suddenly developed.

"She is suffering from persecution mania. She has just been telling me that Sir David is cruel to her. Of all the rubbish! You must persuade him to send her away, Hawke, or I won't be responsible for the consequences."

"Could I have a word with you alone, doctor?" asked Hawke, and led him into another room.

## The Poisoned Whisky.

WHEN Hawke returned, there was a strange glint in his eyes that Tommy knew well. It told him that Hawke was on the trail.

Later that night, from a hiding-place near her room, Tommy saw Claire come out into the corridor and go down the stairs.

Inwardly hating this job of spying on an unhappy girl, he followed her. She went straight to the dining-room, where she mixed a whisky-and-soda and put it on a tray.

"Miss Magnoll!" exclaimed Tommy.

"I thought you were all in bed," she admitted. "My uncle sent me down to fetch this for him, as he is sitting up late with some work."

Tommy muttered an apology, but hurried to Hawke's room, and the detective immediately went to Sir David. He brought the whisky-and-soda back with him, and Tommy watched him make a careful analysis of it.

"Sir David says that he never sent her for it," said Hawke; "and see for yourself, Tommy—there is enough poison in this glass to kill off the three of us!"

"Then you mean that she's guilty?"

asked Tommy. "It's hard to believe. I mean, she just seems an unhappy kid——"

"That is all she is," snapped Hawke. "She is being framed—framed with diabolical cunning. But the trail is too obvious, too blatant——"

## Arrested For Murder!

HAWKE broke off abruptly and spun round. Both Tommy and he plainly heard the sound of the heavy front door closing.

"What's the meaning of that?" gasped Tommy, but found himself speaking to an empty room. He dashed out after Hawke and down the stairs, where they found a scared maid-servant in the hall.

"What has happened? Pull yourself together, girl!" snapped Hawke, for she was obviously frightened almost out of her wits and on the verge of hysterics.

"Miss Claire——" she managed to gasp, calmed by Hawke's steady hand and voice——"she's gone out——without a coat——into the rain! She——she looked terrible——as——as though something dreadful——"

But Hawke waited for no more. He turned and raced up the stairs again, and along to Sir David's room. He knocked, but there was no answer, so he flung the door unceremoniously open. Then he halted, his face a grim mask.

Sir David Magnoll lay on the floor by his desk, a broken cup in his hand. One glance was enough to show that he was dead. This time the poison used had been a corrosive, for his lips were burnt.

Less than an hour later, Claire Magnoll was found wandering dazedly in London and was taken to a police station. There she was formally charged with the murder of her uncle.

Tommy Burke went to see Claire in prison. In spite of the evidence, the young detective could not believe that

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this sad young girl had foully murdered her uncle.

"She's been framed, I tell you," he insisted to Detective-Inspector M'Phinney of Scotland Yard, who was assigned to the case and whom he met at the police station.

"Ay, maybe she has," said M'Phinney soberly. "After speaking with her, I'd almost think so myself, for—well, maybe I'm a sentimental old fool—but she's not the kind to do a thing like this. But the evidence, Tommy! You can't go against the evidence. I've never known it more conclusive."

"Circumstantial evidence has been faked before to-day," protested Tommy.

"Ay, but who by in this case! We've already checked up. Sir David seems to have had no enemies. Nor has the girl—except herself. Because of her strange behaviour, he cut himself adrift from everybody, devoting himself to her. We are checking up the servants, but I don't expect to find anything helpful there."

When Tommy left the police station he felt even worse than before. In the cell, where she was temporarily lodged, Claire had first seemed too dazed to speak. Then she had raved at him hysterically.

"She must be mad," Tommy reported glumly to Hawke. "All she can say for herself is that Sir David was cruel to her. She says he always hated and ill-treated her—not physically, for then you would have seen bruises on her—but with his tongue. She says that it was he who sent her to buy the arsenic on the night that the chemist was suspicious; that he made her prepare his food for him. She says he hated her because her mother preferred his brother to him; that he was the cause of his brother dying in poverty—he ruined her parents and made them suffer for what they did."

Tommy sighed.

"What jury is going to believe any of that in the face of people like us who saw them together, and know how well

Sir David treated her, and how upset he was when she declared that she hated him!" he added bitterly; then realised that Hawke had moved quietly out of the room.

### The Rare Poison.

THE detective was busy at his laboratory bench when Tommy came in, and now he was examining the chemical reaction in a test tube.

"I thought so," he snapped. "Like all his kind, Tommy, this killer has made a mistake. The poison that killed Sir David was argyros nitrate, so rare that nine people out of ten have never heard of it! And that's our first clue!"

"This is the next!" Hawke turned to a big pile of newspaper clippings that had been rushed to him from an agency. "I have here just about every Press reference to Sir David Magnoll that has ever been made, and look at this one."

Tommy stared in bewilderment at a short notice in a clipping from an evening paper to the effect that Sir David Magnoll was found guilty of culpable negligence while in charge of a motor car, was fined £10 and forbidden to hold a driving licence for two years.

"That happened eighteen months ago," said Hawke briskly; "and Sir David had a seriously weak heart, as his doctor informed me this evening. There's a chance there. Now let me see."

He referred to more notes, and the glint in his eyes became more pronounced. "Sir David kept his car, but employed a chauffeur as he was not allowed to drive himself. Chauffeur's name is Alfred Henry Hawkins, a young man with an excellent record, who has been in Sir David's employment since the court case described in that cutting. He was in the habit of taking Sir David for a drive every day."

Hawke broke off abruptly.

# The Wicked Uncle

"Tommy, I am going to take a long shot," he announced. "You go along and see M'Phinney again. Ask him to arrange an appointment for me at the Yard with the Assistant Commissioner this evening. Tell him that I hope to have evidence that will completely alter the case against Claire Magnoll. Warn him that the police look like making a tragic blunder."

"Yes, sir!" said Tommy joyfully.

"And, Tommy, when you've done that, go and cheer up that poor girl. Tell her I believe I can spring the trap into which she has fallen."

"I'm on my way!" said Tommy. "But what are you going to do?"

"Met" said Hawke. "I am going to interview Mr Hawkins, chauffeur to Sir David Magnoll!"

## Tommy Gets Anxious.

TOMMY was not sure what he expected to happen when Hawke set off to interview Mr Hawkins, but he certainly expected action. He arranged the appointment with M'Phinney, and then obtained permission to visit Claire again.

He stayed with her for as long as he could, expecting every moment some word from Hawke. But the hours dragged by and nothing happened. The wave of optimism he had inspired in the girl began to ebb.

"Are you sure Mr Hawke said he could save me?" she pleaded anxiously.

"You bet! He's found the weak spot in some crook's rotten scheme against you and your uncle," insisted the young detective. "He'll put everything right soon."

But the day dragged to its close, and still there was no word from Hawke. Tommy became anxious. He reasoned that his master was dealing with a particularly ruthless murderer. Could the detective have slipped up somewhere, and fallen into the clutches of the killer?

Grim now with anxiety, Tommy found Hawkins' address and went there, but all that Hawkins' wife could tell him was that her husband and the detective had driven away together in a car during the morning, and that she had heard nothing from them since.

Tommy went to Scotland Yard. He communicated his fears to both M'Phinney and the Assistant Commissioner, and the telephone wires began to hum with inquiries, joining the police wireless in broadcasting the description of Hawke, Hawkins, and the car, and ordering all police officers and patrols to keep a sharp lookout for them.

"I believe this man Hawkins was the murderer and he's done the governor in!" exclaimed Tommy at last; but, even as he spoke the door opened, and Hawke strode into the Commissioner's office.

"Confound you, Mac!" he said cheerfully to M'Phinney. "A fine time I've had being held up by your patrols. Any time I want nursemaids I'll hire a couple of pretty ones at a registry office!"

"B-but——" began M'Phinney.

Hawke, however, cut him short.

"This is Sir David Magnoll's chauffeur," he said, indicating his companion. "He and I have been out driving together."

## The Chauffeur's Story.

HE turned to the smart young chauffeur and addressed him.

"Now, Hawkins, to-day I made you cast your mind back to recent drives with Sir David, did I not?" he asked. "I made you repeat those drives with me."

"You did, sir," said Hawkins. "I took you to the places that I used to take Sir David to, following exactly the same route, and stopping exactly where I put him down on various occasions."

"Just so," snapped Hawke. "Some

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

of those calls he made were normal enough, but Sir David never struck me as the sort of man to walk far. I base that statement on the fact that his doctor told me this evening that Sir David was suffering from acute heart disease. The doctor, in fact, had recently told Sir David that he could not live for more than a few months.

"But I'll return to that point later. When Hawkins put me down in certain streets, and then told me that Sir David walked away from the car and was absent for a considerable time, I became interested," went on Hawke. "I reasoned that he would not walk far, so I investigated around the nearest corner to each of those stopping places, and around each corner I found a small chemist's shop.

### The Poison Registers.

"**N**OW," continued Hawke, unpacking the parcel that he carried under his arm, "look at these books. They are the poison registers of each of these chemists, and each records the sale of small quantities of poison—including argyros nitrate—to an elderly gentleman who signed a number of fancy names. As a handwriting expert, I can assure you that each of those signatures was written by Sir David Magnoll.

"Gentlemen!" declared Hawke. "Claire Magnoll speaks the truth. Her uncle hated her. It was he who was

crazy. His brother took from him the woman he loved, and he never forgave him and her. He took their daughter into his home, not to save her, but to torment her, and he did it diabolically, never saying a harsh word to her in public and making her out to be the unreasonable one.

"Then—as Sir David's doctor will testify—he learned that he had not long to live, so he evolved the fiendish scheme of having the daughter of the pair he hated hanged for his death. He set to work to poison himself, while he spread further 'word poison' in the minds of witnesses to fasten the guilt on his niece.

"But two details wrecked his scheme—he became too interested in poisons, and finished himself off with argyros nitrate, which the girl would never have heard of; and, two years ago, he lost his driving licence and had to employ a chauffeur!"

"Then three details wrecked his scheme," supplemented the Commissioner abruptly. "The third was that he tried to crown his scheme by reluctantly bringing you in as a witness against the unhappy girl."

Hawke shrugged, but he had his reward when Tommy and he went a few days later to take Claire Magnoll to friends in the country, for every detail of the detective's case was proved, and that, along with the happy smile he received from that pale face, was all the congratulations he asked.





## THE CASE OF

# The Leading Lady



THE door-bell of Dixon Hawke's flat rang sharply, and the detective and Tommy Burke, who were going through some records, looked up at each other.

They heard the hustling footsteps of their housekeeper, Mrs. Benvie, and then a deep, cultured voice: "I must see Dixon Hawke at once."

Tommy made a face.

"That's a gentleman I'm not going to like," he said. "He'll expect all the world for sixpence, and be annoyed if he doesn't get it!"

Hawke chuckled, while a mutter of conversation ensued downstairs. As the housekeeper came up to announce the caller, Hawke said:

"I've often told you not to judge by appearances, old son. Now you're going one better and judging before you've had a chance even to see the visitor."

"I'll bet you he's dressed to kill, and got wavy hair," said Tommy promptly.

He had some cause for being pleased with his guess a few minutes later, for the man who was ushered into the study was certainly dressed to perfection. But his hair was smooth, straight and well-groomed, all in keeping with a dark, handsome face with a rather long nose, and a pair of flashing brown eyes. Tommy knew him the moment he set eyes on him.

"Ah, Mr Hawke." The man stepped across the room and offered a lean, brown-tanned hand. He was tall and well-built—a man fit to be a screen idol. And, in fact, he was next door to one, for Hawke, as well as Tommy, recognised Julius C. Barber, one of the most popular serious actors of the day. His manner just then was nervous and jumpy. His voice seemed to be controlled by a great effort.

Tommy told himself that Barber was suffering under the strain of considerable emotion, and the dislike he had

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

conceived for the man's abrupt manner with the housekeeper disappeared.

"I suppose you've recognised me," went on Barber. "I——"

"Of course we have," said Hawke with a smile. "Sit down, please. We were just going to have tea. Will you join us?"

He did not wait for an answer, but rang the bell.

### The Missing Actress.

TEA for three was ordered, although Barber looked impatient at the delay. As soon as the door had closed behind Mrs Benvie, he burst out:

"I don't like to be abrupt, Hawke, but I really haven't time for talking over tea. I have to be at the theatre for a special scene rehearsal—we're putting on a new show to-night. One of the first in London for a long time. It's—it's absolutely essential that I should be there, as well as Miss Drayton—my leading lady. I——"

Again Hawke interrupted him.

"I won't keep you long enough to make you late, believe me! And you'll forgive me for saying that you look in need of a little refreshment! First-night nerves, I suppose?"

"I wish to heaven that was all," snapped Barber. "I hardly know where to begin, but—well, Miss Drayton's missing." He flung the words out as if they were a challenge. "She hasn't been seen since the rehearsal yesterday afternoon. Another was called for this morning, and an understudy had to take her part. But without Miss Drayton the show will flop—I know it!"

Hawke leaned forward, gravely.

"When you say 'disappeared' do you mean voluntarily, or against her will?"

"I don't know—that's the devil of it! I—curse it, Hawke, of course it's against her will!"

Barber glared, and Hawke rubbed

his chin thoughtfully. He passed the obvious contradiction and inquired:

"What makes you think so?"

"She's never missed a rehearsal before—she's absolutely dead keen on this play. And we haven't heard a word from her for twenty-four hours!"

He paused as the housekeeper brought in tea. Barber accepted a cup and some biscuits. The tea seemed to do him good and he was more collected as he went on.

"I'm afraid I'm rather woolly-headed this afternoon—it's my own play, and I'm particularly anxious for a big send-off. You will hardly need telling why I've come—I want you to find her."

"So I gathered," said Hawke somewhat drily. "But what help can you give me?"

"None—none at all. I lunched with her yesterday, and we went straight to rehearsal afterwards. Later, she said she had an appointment with a hair-dresser, and went off in a cab straight from the theatre. She hasn't been seen or heard of since. If a rumour leaks out that anything's the matter with her, it will ruin the first night. People won't go to see an understudy, I tell you! The circumstances are difficult enough as it is—we have to start at six o'clock to let the audience get home before dark, and——"

"Six o'clock to-night! And it's now four!" Hawke exclaimed. "Why on earth did you leave it so long in coming to me?"

"I tried everything I could," declared Barber. "I've been waiting desperately hour by hour in the hope that she would turn up. If I go to the police, the Press will get to hear of it. You're my one hope, Hawke. Will you try to find her?"

Hawke pushed his tea to one side.

"I'll do what I can," he promised. "We'll go to her flat immediately, and we can talk on the way."

"Good. I've a taxi waiting outside," said Barber.

On the journey to Alice Drayton's

# The Leading Lady

Westminster flat, Barber went into rather more detail. The actress had been very keen on the play, but something had been worrying her.

She would tell no one what it was, but several people knew it existed. But, he claimed, he would not believe that she would let him and the rest of the cast down. Wherever she was, she was being detained against her will.

"Who might do that?" demanded Hawke.

"I haven't the faintest idea. On the surface of it, it's absurd. But there can be no other explanation, Hawke!"

It was clear, nevertheless, that Barber was afraid there was. He had contradicted himself more than once, and to Tommy it seemed as if the man was close to an emotional breakdown.

## Some Home Truths.

THEY reached the flat at last, and went up to it in the lift of the block where it was situated. As they neared the door, it opened.

Barber drew up sharply.

A short, thin-faced man came from the flat, and looked coldly at the actor. Hawke and Tommy drew back a little, while Barber said:

"What the devil are you doing here, Penson?"

"The same as you, I expect—trying to find Alice," snapped the man named Penson. "What have you done with her?"

"What have I done! What have you done with her, you mean!"

"I've a good mind to break your fool neck for that," rapped Penson. "By the by, all you think about is keeping the centre of the stage yourself. You know only too well she'll act you into a corner, and you've staged the disappearance to prevent it."

It looked as if Barber would lose what was left of his self-control. He took a lunge forward, with his fist clenched, and but for Hawke's restraining grip would have struck the

other man. Hawke spoke at the same time as he moved.

"Easy, Mr Barber! Talking like this won't help us."

"Who the deuce are you?" demanded Penson.

"My name's Dixon Hawke," returned the criminologist quietly, "and Mr Barber has called me in to try to find Miss Drayton."

"That's a fine story," Penson sneered. "He might have done that to pull the wool over my eyes—and other people's—but if you want to know where she is, make him talk."

"Supposing we discuss this in the flat and not in the passage?" asked Hawke.

"There's nothing to discuss——"

"Oh, yes, there is," said Hawke sharply. "You've made a serious and obviously considered accusation against my client. I want it explained at once."

Penson's eyes narrowed. Tommy thought he would try to get away, but he did not, and the party went into the flat, which was being looked after by a middle-aged servant.

Penson, it appeared, was Alice Drayton's business manager. It soon grew clear that if she failed to appear, he would lose his commission on her salary—and that possibility was frightening him. He sobered down a little, although it was apparent that he and the actor were bitterly antagonistic.

Hawke questioned the servant, but she was unable to give him any information. That finished, he sent Tommy Burke to the taxi-rank outside the Wells Theatre, where the new show was to appear. Tommy inquired of the drivers there who had driven Miss Drayton on the previous afternoon.

The driver, a man named Gloster, was out with a fare, but might be back at any time. Tommy, who was well-known, spent half an hour in the cabmen's shelter, until the door opened and Gloster appeared. He was a big, middle-aged man, friendly of countenance and very quick with his tongue.

## Dixon Hawke Case Book—No. 7

He heard Tommy out, and then rubbed his chin.

"Well, me young cock-o-lorum, I took the lady, that's a fact. Pretty piece, I see to meself, me having an eye for a nice pair o' ankles, that's a fact. 'My flat,' she says, as if I knew where she lived, which is also a fact, young feller-me-lad! Then on the way she taps on the glass. 'Drive me to Waterloo Station instead,' she ses, an' blow me, that's what I did. Off she went, and gave me a shilling tip, so there you are."

### The Infallible Memory.

TOMMY telephoned the gist of Gloster's statement to Hawke, who by then had reached the Dover Street flat again. Hawke said: "Go over to Waterloo, old son. Make inquiries among the porters and others regularly on the station. I can tell you that Miss Drayton wore a grey costume and a scarlet hat, with scarlet gloves. Add that she's exceptionally pretty, and you might get some results. When you've finished, come back here."

"Right-ho, guv'nor," Tommy rang off, thanked the cabbies for their assistance, and tipped Gloster a shilling. Then he had an idea and said to the cabby: "Can you take me to the place where you put Miss Drayton down at the station?"

"Why sure I can, me old son-of-a-gun," declared Gloster. "Hop in the old chariot, and I'll drive you there in state."

He treated the rest of the cabbies to a blatant wink, and then started off with his fare. He put Tommy down at the main line entrance, and then started back to his rank.

Tommy made several inquiries without any result. Then he found an old, thin-faced porter, Ben by name.

Ben, according to his fellow-porters, never forgot a face, and he had been at the cab-arrival platform all the previous afternoon, except when he was carrying

someone's luggage. Tommy had already checked up the time Miss Drayton arrived—it had been just after five o'clock.

Ben looked at him suspiciously, but grew communicative when he was tipped.

"I was 'ere from ar'past four to a quarter past five, sir, never 'ad a job. All the time I was 'ere. An' I don't remember seein' your young lady."

Tommy pressed the elderly porter further with questions, but Ben was adamant, and others supported him in saying that he would have remembered the lady in question had she arrived. Puzzled, Tommy telephoned Dixon Hawke, and the criminologist said:

"So Gloster the cahman says she was taken there, and Ben the porter says she didn't arrive. One or the other is probably lying, old son."

"If one of them is, it's Gloster," said Tommy decisively. "He's one of those half-fellow-well-met kind, and I don't trust him. But why on earth should he lie?"

"We'll find that out," said Hawke quietly. "There's a change of orders, my lad. Go to Barber's flat—it's in Chelsea. Number 31, Dring Court. Have you got that?"

Tommy felt a thrill of excitement. Something in Hawke's voice suggested that there was a development of which he knew nothing.

"Right-ho, guv'nor! Will we find her there?"

Hawke chuckled. "You're too optimistic! Get there and wait for me."

Tommy took another taxi. There was no time to be lost, for Hawke's manner made it clear that the matter was urgent. In any case it was nearly five past five. In less than an hour they had to find the actress, or the first-night would be a failure.

Was that wholly true?

In his scurrying from one place to another, Tommy had not been able to give much thought to the other issue—the enmity between Barber and Penson.

# The Leading Lady

Had one man or the other lied? Had the accusations which had come so freely from each of them any foundation in fact?

Barber might well want to take the centre of the stage, and it would not be the first time a criminal had asked Hawke for help, thus planning to escape suspicion.

## The Second Taxi.

HABITUALLY, Tommy looked through the small window of the cab as they went along the road; Hawke was always careful when he was on a case, and had taught Tommy to be as cautious.

With a start, Tommy realised that he was being followed by another cab; and Gloster, in ordinary togs, was at the wheel.

He leaned forward and slid open the glass partition.

"Make it faster, cabby, can you?"

But it happened that immediately afterwards another cab cut in in front of them, forcing them to slow down. Gloster drew within a few feet of the first cab. Tommy felt his heart beating fast, and then he saw Gloster pull out to pass him.

He shouted through the open partition: "Slow down! Slow down!"

Instinctively the cabby obeyed—and then Gloster cut across his front wheels! Had they been going at speed a serious crash would have been inevitable. As it was, the shouted order had slowed them down by ten miles an hour.

Nevertheless the cabby had been compelled to wrench at his wheel to avoid crashing into the back of Gloster's vehicle. The cab struck heavily against the kerb, and beeled over. For a moment Tommy thought that a crash was unavoidable, and the driver could do nothing to prevent it.

It was a sickening moment.

Then, slowly, the cab righted itself. Tommy, thrown into one corner, slithered to the centre of the seat. It was soon apparent that the cabby was more scared than hurt, but a policeman came hurrying up to take particulars.

The delay made Tommy fume, particularly since Gloster had gone on ahead. He did not doubt that the driver was going to Barber's place.

Another taxi—the day seemed full of taxis—took Tommy at speed to Barber's flat, and when he got there he saw Gloster coming away.

The man was walking hurriedly—doubtless he had parked his car some distance away—with his back towards Tommy. The latter's cab drew up alongside, and Tommy swung open the door, and stood for a moment on the running-board. Then he flung himself bodily at Gloster.

Taken completely by surprise, the big cabby went crashing. Tommy fell on top of him, but Gloster's size and weight made the odds considerably against the youngster. Gloster was swearing viciously, using every foul trick. Tommy felt powerful hands tightening on his throat.

And then someone came to his assistance. Gloster was dragged off and Tommy struggled to his feet. He saw Hawke and Penson together, and several other people nearby.

Hawke was smiling somewhat grimly. "Thanks be that you're all right, old son! Can you get along on your own?"

"I—I can have a good try," gasped Tommy.

He followed Hawke and Penson into Dring Court, and stopped outside Barber's flat. Hawke knocked sharply. There was a pause and then the door opened.

Hawke pushed his way past the startled Barber, who had opened it—and there on a couch, with her hands and feet tied, was one of the loveliest girls Tommy had seen in his life!

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Penson drew a sharp breath.

"There you are, Hawke! She's in his flat—it's Barber's foul game! That caddy came here to warn him, but there wasn't time to get the girl away!"

Barber drew back, white to the lips.

"That's a lie, Penson! I came in here a few minutes ago, and had the shock of my life when I saw her. I've been trying to get those knots undone."

"How many people do you expect to believe that?" sneered Penson.

Barber looked desperately from one man to another. He drew himself up—and then he turned to the couch, and began to unfasten the girl's cords. Penson went forward also, but Hawke stopped him.

"Just a moment, Penson. There is a question you can answer. How did you know it was a taxi-driver fighting with my assistant?"

Penson drew back. "I didn't say—"

"You certainly did!" snapped Hawke. "Now for the whole truth. You arranged with Gloster yesterday to take Miss Drayton away, for some reason only you know. Then Gloster phoned you about Tommy's inquiries at the station. You knew things were dangerous, and so you told Gloster to bring Miss Drayton here. She is probably lightly drugged—probably, too, she was able to walk up the stairs although not aware of where she was. Then Gloster bound her, to make the case look black against Barber. That's why Gloster was here so long."

"It—it isn't true!" gasped Penson.

"It is! Gloster saw Tommy coming here and tried to stop him. Isn't that so, Tommy?"

Tommy nodded, while Penson swung round on his heel. But Tommy was standing grimly in the doorway, and the man realised that there was no escape. Hawke thought he would try to make a fight, but instead Penson lost his self-control completely.

"All right, blast you, it's true! I used to manage Barber. He left me

and made a fortune—I've never forgiven him for that. Then he took Alice away from me—no one knows how I loved her, how I planned to marry her! He robbed me of her and I planned to ruin them both!"

"Why both of them?" asked Hawke quietly.

"Barber because he needed a packed house and an enthusiastic audience to-night. I knew he would be lost without Alice. And Alice because if she was doing badly she would be more likely to turn to me. I didn't mean to harm her, Hawke, you must believe that!"

"I think I do," said Hawke grimly, "but you and Gloster will face a charge of abduction, if not worse."

Then from the couch Barber turned round.

"She's recovering, Hawke! She'll be all right for to-night, she must be!"

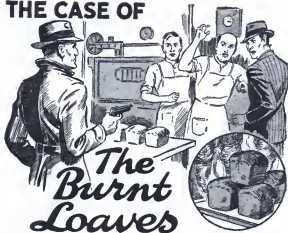
"Let her have every second of rest she can, and I think probably she will be," said Hawke after a brief examination of the actress. "Her pulse is steady enough, and she's running no temperature. Penson, you're coming with me to the police."

The police were already outside with Gloster. Hawke made his report and then hurried with Tommy to the Wells Theatre, where they thoroughly enjoyed a show in which both actor and actress put up a superb performance.

"What made you suspect Penson, gar'nor?" asked Tommy later.

"Because it was clear that he was only pretending to be worried. Barber was really frantic. If either man was guilty, Penson was the one. I believed my presence would frighten him—that, or your good work at the station certainly did! And the likely place for him to send her was here—in the hope of incriminating Barber. A precious scoundrel, one way and another—but there'll be a happy ending between Barber and Miss Drayton, or I'm no student of human nature!"

# THE CASE OF



## The Burnt Loaves

"STOP, thief!"

The cry echoed above the rumble of London traffic, while along the crowded Marylebone Road a little man ran like a deer.

He had an agility far above the average, for he dodged cleverly in and out of the crowd, evading all hands thrust out to stop him.

His thin, furtive face was set and tense, as if he realised the chances were against him.

A policeman's whistle shrieked.

Three or four men in blue were running full pelt after the fugitive, who had reached a clearer patch of road, and then dived into a side street. As he did so a youthful, well-knit figure joined in the chase. Tommy Burke, who had heard the shouts of alarm, had started from a good position and was soon yards ahead of all the others.

By the kerb were two or three tradesmen's vans.

The fugitive took a desperate glance behind him, saw Tommy's nearness,

and leapt into one of the vans. Luckily for him the engine started first shot, and he eased off the brake as he let in the clutch.

The van jumped for a moment, seemed about to stop, but as Tommy reached the running-board it gathered speed.

The driver thrust out his hand, catching Tommy on the chin. The force of the blow was not great, but Tommy was off his balance. He went flying off the running-board, and only the stalwart figure of a policeman just behind him saved him from a nasty fall.

But it did not help the situation.

The policeman also lost his balance, and they fell together, not heavily enough to do either of them any harm, but enough to wind them.

When Tommy picked himself up, a small crowd, including several policemen, had gathered.

The van was out of sight.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"Hang it!" exclaimed Tommy. "I thought I had him."

"You didn't do so badly," said one of the policemen. "You didn't have time to notice the number of the van, I suppose!"

"No," said Tommy. "But the driver will be back, won't he?"

But the driver wasn't coming back. This was made clear when another constable came along. "It's just one of those times when everything goes wrong," he said. "The van driver was delivering bread to one of the blocks of flats and slipped down some stairs. He's been taken to hospital, and it will be some time before we can question him. Until then we can't find out who he's driving for."

Tommy looked rueful.

"I read the name and address automatically as I ran," he said, "but I can't remember it now. If it comes to mind I'll let you know at the station."

"Better come round with me," said a sergeant, who had recognised Dixon Hawke's assistant, "and give us a report. That van should not have been left unattended."

### The Name On The Van.

**T**HUS it was that Tommy kept Hawke waiting for more than an hour for some tobacco which he had gone out to buy, and when he reached their Dover Street flat, Hawke was chewing the end of an empty pipe.

Tommy apologised, and went into a rush of explanations.

"Steady!" exclaimed Hawke. "If you made a report as mixed as that to the police, they'll think I've got a dad for an assistant."

Tommy chuckled, and explained more concisely and in greater detail.

"Apparently it was a really hare-faced robbery," he concluded. "The thief made an appointment to see some small, unset diamonds, grabbed them off the glass counter, and ran. There

was about five thousand pounds worth."

"Quite a haul for a snatch-and-run thief," said Hawke, and Tommy knew that something about the case intrigued him. "And there are several other interesting features. It's a pity you can't remember the baker's name—you're sure it was a baker's van!"

"Oh, yes," said Tommy. "I saw the gold lettering—Baker and Confectioner."

"That's progress of a sort. What colour was the van?"

"Green," said Tommy promptly.

"Good! A green van with gold lettering. Was the name in the middle or at one side?"

"In the middle," said Tommy, and he frowned in concentrated effort. "Just a moment, gu'nor! It was a short name, not very common—got it! Rudge—B. Rudge, of Brake Street!"

Hawke smiled. "You hadn't forgotten, you see—you just went about remembering it the wrong way. What are you going to do?" he demanded as Tommy reached for the telephone.

"Tell the police," said Tommy.

"Let's go round and see this baker ourselves," said Hawke. "We haven't anything of special importance to do this morning."

"What is there in it that interests you?" asked Tommy, as they stepped into the hallway for their hats and coats.

"I'm not going to do your thinking for you," said Hawke. "Everything is there for you to see. Get your mind busy, old son!"

Tommy did, but rather unsuccessfully. To him it looked like an ordinary enough robbery, with only one note out of the usual run—the hazy nature of the thief. It was quite usual for a thief who was cornered to take a parked car or van—although not so easy since the Government's car-locking order had come into force.

Brake Street was on the other side of Marylebone, but in Hawke's big



## The Burnt Loaves

car they reached the baker's premises in a few minutes. There was an attractive shop window, with several girl assistants inside.

A middle-aged woman, with a badge stating she was manageress, approached them.

"I would like a word with the manager about the deliveries in the Dover Street area," said Hawke.

led into the bake-house. It was a machine bakery with a big revolving oven. Tommy felt the heat stifling him, but looked around with interest at two white-smocked men and half a dozen girls also in white.

The bigger of the bakers, hurly, red-faced, and sweating freely, looked at Hawke with annoyance. "Don't you think I'm busy enough as it



As Tommy attempted to jump on the running-board, the driver's hand caught him over the chin.

"You will want to see Mr Rudge, the proprietor," he was told, "and he is busy in the bake-house, I'm afraid."

"We'll see him there," said Hawke promptly.

"Well, it isn't usual, but I will find out if he will see you."

The woman disappeared, to return after a few seconds. "Come this way, please."

Past sacks of flour, boxes of dried fruit, and stores of all kinds, they were

in, with a small staff because of the war, without being worried by complaints?" he demanded.

"You misunderstand me," smiled Hawke, and he explained briefly, but comprehensively. The other assistants stopped work to listen.

Rudge's annoyance quickly changed to concern.

"This is really worrying," he said. "And I can't thank you enough for informing me so quickly. Bert Adams—

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

the man driving that van—is a valuable roundsman. I'll have to find out how he is at once. And"—Rudge frowned "there is this delivery to finish, and the afternoon's round, not to mention a van-load of bread missing!"

"Bad luck," sympathised Hawke. "But if you give me the number of the van I'll have the police locate it—the thief won't have driven it far."

Rudge obliged, and Hawke used a phone in a small office near the bake-house. Tommy remained in the big room, intrigued by the conveyor system of cutting and weighing bread and making cakes. The girls worked deftly, and he was too fascinated to notice Hawke return. Rudge looked up as Hawke said, "Now I'm going to be a nuisance again. Bert Adams is the roundsman, you say. Has he been with you long?"

Rudge frowned.

"No—only six months. Er—you are Hawke, the detective, aren't you?"

"That's right."

"Well, I can tell you, then," said Rudge in a low-pitched voice. "If it weren't for the war I wouldn't have employed Adams. He's a really good worker, but dishonest. He's been sentenced for stealing several times, but with men so hard to get I gave him another chance."

Hawke looked thoughtful, as he said: "His accident may prove genuine, in which case he can't be implicated in this," he said. "But it's as well to know the facts. I——"

He stopped abruptly, for the other man had just opened a door of a small independent oven—and thick smoke poured into the bake-house. Rudge threw up his hands in despair.

"More trouble! That's a special bake of bread for a small restaurant—burned to nothing!" He stepped to the oven and his assistant muttered an apology.

Rudge said nothing, and the two of them brought out the ruined batch of loaves.

Hawke called Tommy aside, and

they were not sorry to reach the cooler and cleaner air of the shop.

Once outside Tommy said—

"Did you suspect the van-driver, guv'nor!"

"Suspect is hardly the word," said Hawke. "We'll go and see the jeweller now, I think. I——" he stopped suddenly, and pulled up short by the big car. "There's just a chance that the accident wasn't serious, but was genuine. Stay by the bake-house, Tommy, and keep your eyes open. The van-driver might return—and it's even possible that the thief you saw will call to see him."

"I don't follow that," said Tommy, "but I'll keep my eyes open, guv'nor."

He watched Hawke drive off, and then approached the rear door of the bake-house. The yard had two empty vans in it, and before he had been there five minutes someone began to load one of them.

"Put that burnt load in," said Rudge's voice, "and if you can't get rid of them, bring 'em back."

"Right-ho," said the man loading.

Tommy kept on watching.

### The Suspected "Fence."

SOME miles away Hawke entered the shop of Abel Kohn, jeweller and watchmaker.

It was a small shop, but obviously a prospering one. A little, plump man with furtive brown eyes was talking to a burly man Hawke recognised as Chief Inspector Blair, of New Scotland Yard. The little man was Kohn himself.

"I don't like your manner, Inspector," he was saying. He talked with a faint lisp. "I prepared the stones as requested by a customer, that is all."

"You ought to have taken more precautions," said Blair. "You don't usually neglect them, Kohn."

"What are you suggesting?" demanded the jewel-merchant, bristling.

# The Burnt Loaves

"I'm just telling you that it looks like wilful negligence," said Blair. "If I was representing the insurance company I wouldn't pay out, believe me."

"That is insolence!" flared Kohn.

He might have gone on at some length, but saw Hawke enter and stopped immediately. He smiled blandly, rubbing his hands.

"Good-morning, sir. What can I do for you? I—oh, it's Dixon Hawke." He looked nonplussed and in no way pleased, which was not surprising. Kohn had long been suspected of working as a "fence," and he was as wary of Hawke as of the police. "What do you want?"

"I'm on the same errand as the inspector, I expect," said Hawke mildly. "Did you know the baker has been located, Blair?"

"Yes." Blair was none too gracious; like many of the officers at Scotland Yard, he was inclined to resent Hawke's interest, although there were times when he was glad enough of the private detective's help. "And I can tell you more—the van was stranded in a side street no more than half a mile from where it was taken."

"That will please Rudge," smiled Hawke. "He wants to get it out on the round again. Has it been searched?"

"Of course—and tested for fingerprints. But the thief wore gloves and there's nothing to help us."

"It would be an idea," said Kohn sharply. "If you two gentlemen discussed your troubles elsewhere. As for you, Inspector, I shall expect an unqualified apology for your quite unjustifiable accusations."

"I haven't accused you of anything—yet," said Blair grimly, and he pushed his way past Hawke to the street. Hawke showed no inclination to go, and Kohn peered up at him, unable to hide his nervousness.

"What is it, Hawke?"

"I'm going to be frank," said the criminologist. "The police evidently think this is a frame-up for the insurance companies. They think you

staged the robbery in order to claim insurance. Are they right?"

Kohn stopped rubbing his hands. There was something impressive about him then.

"No, Hawke. I am not going to get indignant, because I know you're right, and they do suspect me. But I had no idea it was a trap."

"Right!" Hawke spoke briskly. "I'm going to believe you, and assume that you are anxious to get the diamonds back."

Kohn nodded. "I am. They are insured, of course, but only at their peacetime value. I shall lose over a thousand pounds if I have to rely on insurance."

"All the more reason you should help me to find the thief. Now—how was the appointment made?"

"For viewing the stones, you mean! By telephone."

"In whose name?"

"The name given was Fraser, and normally I might have asked questions, but in London these days, business is so bad that chances must be taken."

"You hadn't seen the thief before!"

"No. He was a complete stranger."

"Did you have the diamonds loose on the counter?"

"On a velvet cloth," said Kohn.

"There were eleven stones in all, and he got away with eight of them."

"Did he come by foot or by car?"

"By foot—I was watching for him. There were no cars in sight when he arrived."

"I see," said Hawke quietly. "All right, Kohn, I'll do all I can to get your stones back for you."

"I'm sure you will," said the jeweller, and as Hawke left the shop Kohn was rubbing his hands together.

## A Quick Recovery.

HAWKE drove to the bakery. Tommy was looking bored, but brightened up at the sight of the big car. He stepped on to the running-board.

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"Well, what's happened?" asked Hawke.

"Nothing much," said Tommy. "One van has gone out and another one has come in—presumably the one the thief pinched—there was a policeman at the wheel."

"How soon after I had gone did the first van go?"

"It was loaded about a quarter of an hour later, I suppose. Rodge told his man to try and get rid of the burnt leaves. I think that was about the only thing of interest! No one else has entered or left."

"All right," said Hawke. "But you're going to stay here, old son!" He laughed at Tommy's obvious disappointment, and added, "Ring me at the flat the moment the van comes back."

Tommy looked nonplussed, but Hawke was away before the youngster could ask questions. Hawke drove to the police station near Dover Street, and Inspector Blair greeted him in no very good temper.

"I don't know what you're so interested in," he granted. "It's obvious to me that Kohn staged the robbery, but it isn't going to be easy to prove it."

"I doubt even if it can be proved," said Hawke, "because I don't think it happened. No, don't start going off the deep end," he added sharply. "Have you checked up about the accident to the baker's roundsman?"

"Yes. He's been sent home—it wasn't much, but it was genuine enough."

"Did you know that he has been sacked from several jobs because of dishonesty?"

"No. I didn't. But—hang it, Hawke, he had the accident all right! He dislocated his shoulder and they had to put it back at the hospital."

"Do you know his address?"

"Yes." Blair pulled a notebook from his pocket. "97, Edgeware Road. Are you thinking of going to see him?"

"It might be an idea," said Hawke. "Coming!"

Blair nodded and they hurried to the address. It was a small flat at the top of an old house, and a middle-aged woman answered the door.

"Is Mr Adams in?" asked Hawke.

"No, 'e ain't! 'E 'as to work for a living."

"We don't want impertinence," snapped Blair. "Has he been here since he left for work this morning?"

"No, he ain't!"

"I think I'll have a look round," said Blair.

But the flat was empty, although they could not be sure whether the woman told the truth. When they were once more in the street, Blair looked keenly at Hawke and demanded:

"Well, what do you make of it now, Hawke?"

"One thing answers itself," said Hawke quietly. "Bert Adams is supposed to be at home because of a dislocated shoulder, but isn't there. The woman, presumably his wife, is afraid of something—and the something is obviously the possibility that we suspect Adams of some kind of crooked business. So the quicker you find Adams the better."

"But I can't see what he has to do with it," said Blair.

"We'll find that fast enough," said Hawke cryptically. "I'm going to my flat—can I drop you anywhere?"

"No—I'll take a cab to the Yard and get a call out for Adams," said Blair grimly.

## An Unfinished Message.

HAWKE was at his flat a few minutes later, and he had hardly sat down before the telephone rang.

"Guv'nor—the little crook has——"

Tommy's voice sounded excited—but on the word "has" he stopped abruptly. There was a strangled cry, and then the telephone went dead.

# The Burnt Loaves

Hawke was on his feet in a trice, and he rushed down to the car, parked outside. His face was set and grim as he started for the bakery.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tommy Burke had suddenly seen the runaway enter the bakehouse yard, followed by a second, older man. Almost on their heels the van which he had seen go out earlier had returned. Its driver and the others went inside the bakehouse.

Tommy went forward to look through a window, but could see nothing. He glanced into the delivery van, and saw that it was empty but for a dozen burnt loaves.

Opposite the yard was a telephone kiosk.

He hurried to it, so intent on getting word through to Hawke, that he did not keep a look-out, and he didn't see the two men come from the bakery. The first he knew of trouble was when the kiosk door opened, and a strong hand closed over his mouth.

A "cob" descended on his head, and he lost consciousness, unaware that he was carried across the by-road and taken into the yard. He was huddled into a delivery van and the door was locked on him.

The thief and Adams, the supposedly injured driver—it was they who had caught Tommy phoning—now hurried into the bakery. It was empty, work being finished for the day. They crossed towards the office, there to warn their boss, Rudge.

Hawke, meanwhile, made short work of the run. He reached the bakehouse yard and parked the car alongside the van in which Tommy was imprisoned. Unaware of that, he entered the bakehouse and stepped across to the office.

Rudge and the two others looked round in surprise.

Adams cursed, and with the little thief leapt towards Hawke, but the detective slipped an automatic from his pocket. They stopped and Hawke said quietly:

"So I've caught the three of you together!"

Rudge drew a deep breath.

"What are you talking about! I don't know what these two have been doing, but I've had no part in it!"

"Haven't you?" demanded Hawke. "I'll make you change your mind. A conveniently-placed van into which your crook employee has slipped with stolen jewels—Adams at the wheel, a man who can put his shoulder out without difficulty, and always pretend to have had an accident. I was pretty sure about how it was worked."

"Adams is a thief, as I told you, and the other man's a stranger. I know nothing about it," snapped Rudge.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Hawke. "The diamonds were brought here. The thief drove the van here—no one would notice that, it's so usual—left the jewels and then stranded the van half a mile away."

"It's a lie," sneered Rudge. "If you think it's true, where are the diamonds?"

"In the burnt loaves!" said Hawke with calm assertion. "No modern electrically-controlled oven would burn bread like that unless it was deliberately set at too high a temperature. Where are the loaves?"

Rudge turned pale. He might have started a fight, but for Hawke's gun. Instead, he led the way to the van. Hawke saw the loaves and Tommy was sitting up, conscious, and with a loaf cut in two. In the middle of the dough—which was hardly cooked inside the crust—something glittered like fire!

"I had this idea when I came round!" exclaimed Tommy. "The diamonds are here, gov'nor!"

"And so are the three crooks," said Hawke. "All ready for Blair when he arrives. Rudge, you made a vital mistake. Vans have to be locked if left for more than five minutes. This wasn't and that made me very curious. The rest came automatically. It looks," he added whimsically, "as if your bakehouse is going to be much more short-handed in future!"

## THE CASE OF

# The Rusty Weight



**M**R MERVYN BOSTOCK was obviously determined that his chemist's business should carry on as usual during the inquiries into the rather odd circumstances of the death, on the previous afternoon, of his father-in-law, old Percy Morgan.

Tommy Burke watched Bostock with interest.

A straight, stiff-backed man with hard, glittering eyes, he was obviously bullying Herbie Hicks, the shirt-sleeved delivery-man and warehouse-man. Herbie was a strange-looking fellow who carried his head to one side, with a deeply-furrowed, rapidly-grinning face, and thick, slaverling lips.

"Mr Hawke's just left," said Mr Bostock, pivoting round on his heel and surveying Tommy in half-smiling appraisal.

"I fancy I heard him telling the police officer that he was staying at the Queen's Hotel," he went on, advancing as Tommy retreated.

"Thanks," said Tommy, trying to

repress a whimsical notion that he was being shooed out like a stray cat.

"I'll find him," he added, and, with a pitying glance round at the hard-working assistants, turned and strode out of Toneford's most go-ahead shop.

### Incredible Savings!

**H**ERBIE Hicks and old Morgan have been living on the premises," the police superintendent was saying to Hawke in the lounge of the hotel, "and it seems they were the only two left there after the early closing.

"Still," he added, "we haven't enough direct evidence."

Tommy appeared and handed over the mail for which Hawke had telephoned, and the detective began sifting the envelopes while still continuing to give the bulk of his attention to the superintendent.

"So you want some indirect evidence, eh?"

# The Rusty Weight

"Namely, a motive! And I'm thinking I've just about got all that a jury could ask for in that direction. This man, Herbie Hicks, tries to tell us he's saved seven hundred odd pounds in eight years out of a wage of twenty-five bob a week! And he's supposed to be a half-wit at that! How else could Hicks have come by all that money except by stealing it! Besides, his very action in running away is a confession of guilt."

"All the same your chief constable advises that you let him go for the time being!"

"I expect it's some screwy young lawyer in the public prosecutor's office. He says there's no proof that it isn't Herbie's money, but that, if it isn't, a person of his low mentality is likely to give himself away by suddenly altering his style of living. So, for the time being, I've just got to keep him under observation."

## The Mystery 'Phone-Call.

THE police officer departed and Hawke began putting his young assistant abreast of events.

"The chemist's shop used to be a tumble-down shack belonging to Morgan," he said. "Then Bostock came along to work as an assistant, married Morgan's daughter, who died a year or so back, and proceeded to pep the place up so that it is now the centre of a chain of more than a dozen stores in the district."

"I could see he was a smart chap," grinned Tommy. "They always make me feel as if I'd just come out without washing, after sleeping for a week in my suit. I'll bet the lives of those poor worms who work for him aren't worth living!"

"Yesterday was early-closing day," proceeded Hawke, "and Bostock went off up to the golf club, of which he is chairman, to look over the account books.

"About three o'clock in the afternoon somebody rang the police station from a public call-box, and, in a voice which might have been Herbie Hick's normal voice, or somebody else's voice disguised, said that old Morgan would be found dead in the store at the back of the shop, and that Bostock had done him in sure enough.

"The caller's speech was very thick and indistinct, just like Hicks, though the policeman who answered the phone couldn't positively identify him.

"The store in question is a long narrow wing, jutting out from the back of the shop and overlooking a strip of newly-raked soil on which were foot-prints, later found to be Herbie Hicks's, leading from the storeroom door to the backyard gate.

"The police found Morgan lying on his back on the stone floor, apparently having slipped in a pool of spilt oil.

"His head was resting on a rusty old 56-pound weight, and he was found to have sustained a fracture at the back of the neck. His right elbow was also fractured, and that, too, was consistent with a fall backwards.

"Apart from that queer phone message, and the fact that Herbie Hicks had left the town, there was nothing to suggest that it was anything but a pure accident.

"They caught Herbie Hicks at Pay-way, a few miles down the London Road. He lied furiously, and, from his various contradictions, it appeared that he had probably panicked unreasonably on seeing the dead man, and run away thinking that he would be charged with killing him.

"That attitude of mind might also explain the childish move of ringing up the police and trying to implicate Bostock. What remains unexplained, however, is the large sum of money in hanknotes — over seven hundred pounds — that Hicks had on him. He insisted that the money represented his personal savings.

"Certainly Bostock doesn't claim it, and he is unable to say whether Morgan,

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who was rather secretive, had ever had such a sum in his possession.

"Hicks made it clear that he did not expect a fair deal from the police, and insisted on having legal advice and an independent investigation. Which is why we happen to be here."

"And what has Hicks told you, sir?"

"Nothing that he has not told the police."

"Good heavens! What does he expect you to do for him then? Surely he doesn't still insist that he didn't phone the police?"

"He does. And most emphatically. He asked me why he should go phoning the police at a time when he was frantic to get out of their way."

"The man's mad!"

"I asked him who else it could possibly have been. No one but Bostock, Morgan, and he had access to the place during the afternoon, and it could hardly have been Bostock trying to incriminate himself! When I put that proposition, Hicks just shrugged his shoulders, and once more repeated that it was not he who phoned. Oddly enough, he almost convinced me that he was speaking the truth."

"Well! That makes a mystery of it!"

"It does, rather, doesn't it?"

"Introduces an unknown fourth party!"

"All we can do is to check every fact that might be used as evidence against anyone concerned in the case."

### A Complete Change-Over.

TOMMY was later despatched to the golf club to make a few tactful inquiries as to the time of Mr Bostock's arrival and departure on the previous afternoon.

The golf professional, a dismal man, when questioned asked in turn, "Was he here? I wouldn't know. Nobody'd know, 'cept him. He runs the place. I expect he'll be along directly, strut-

ting round the greens. I have to see to them as well now. Another job he shoved on me to save expense, and I told him I couldn't be everywhere at once."

Returning from the golf course shortly before dusk, Tommy found his employer busy making a careful examination of the dispensary at the back of Bostock's shop. Bostock was also there.

This room, large and well equipped, like the rest of the shop, was situated in a short wing which faced the one in which the store was situated, on the other side of the narrow strip of garden.

Tommy was astounded at the weariness in Bostock's voice and his dejection of manner as he stood by Hawke's side against the laboratory bench, in front of the window, and answered questions.

"Copper sulphate, I think," Hawke was saying as he examined a substance that adhered to a large mortar and pestle.

Lying on the bench nearby was a small potting fork to which traces of garden mould clung, and, glancing out of the window, Tommy perceived that it had been used to dig up a clod or two on the strip of raked soil.

"Yes, I made up a few compounds for the laboratory at the school," said Bostock in answer to Hawke's comment. His weariness and despondency were so strong that Tommy began to feel himself sharing them.

It was difficult to believe that this was the perky, go-ahead man he had seen in the shop earlier.

All his smug assurance had gone. He kept glancing about him as though he feared some menace that lurked in the shadows.

"Hang on here and see that none of the assistants disturb anything," said Hawke to Tommy. "Mr Bostock and I are going to have a little chat with the police surgeon."

Tommy was looking round the room after the last of the assistants had



# The Rusty Weight

gone, and was still wondering at the change in Bostock's manner.

It was not any particular sound that caused him suddenly to stand stock still, his breath held, and the flesh "crawling" on the back of his neck, but just that strange sense of another presence.

He turned and beheld Herbie Hicks and he beheld him from a new and uncomfortable standpoint.

When he was looked at, not as a harmless half-wit, whom thoughtless children made fun of, but as a possible killer, Herbie's whole appearance became appallingly sinister.

## Tommy In A Spot!

HERBIE made queer gasping noises, sucking in his breath through large, wet lips.

"Y'aint found the mur'erer, ha' ye? Huh!"

Tommy saw that at the back of the idiotic grin was something else—a hardness and a cruel cunning in the expression of the eyes.

"Twa'nt me done 'im in," went on Herbie, his gaze fixed unwinkingly on Tommy's face. "I ain't ne'er done no mur'er, bn' I sure could. Ah-ah-ah! That I could. . . ."

There followed some unintelligible words as Herbie pulled up his shirt sleeves, revealing enormous knotted muscles.

"Loo'. Shee lat! Muskle. Kill 'um. I kill 'um. They shink me a fool. Shink they can uh, uh, like that——"

He made a motion of someone wielding a whip.

"——li' a dog. Me. Well, I ain't, shee! No' a dog. Kill 'um I could. Shee my muskle."

Herbie had advanced until he towered right over Tommy, and the youth made the psychological blunder of shrinking back.

As he took a pace backward round the end of the table he saw a change

come over Herbie's face, and perceived that the inane grin was not a grin at all, but a leer of the ugliest kind.

Herbie became excited and sucked in his breath more and more rapidly until his breathing was almost hysterical.

The impulse which caused him to snatch up a heavy packing-case opener and hold it poised threateningly over Tommy's head probably had its origin in playfulness, but, playful or otherwise, it was pure excitement that now dominated Herbie, so that he was no longer in proper control of himself.

He brought the heavy instrument down with a loud crack on to the table top where Tommy's knuckles had been a fraction of a second before.

Tommy snatched his hand away just in time to avoid getting it crushed.

Herbie giggled, and the next thing Tommy knew, as he involuntarily ducked, was that the steel bar was whipping viciously towards his head.

Tommy ducked and it thudded into the distemper wall at his side, bringing some plaster down, whereupon the plucky lad threw himself forward and butted Herbie in the stomach, an action which brought the pair of them down.

## The Struggle For Water.

TOMMY and Hicks struggled fiercely on the floor for a moment, and as he rolled away out of Herbie's reach, Tommy saw the fellow spring to his feet and reach towards a shelf for a missile.

His gaunited, begrimed hands closed about a round glass container in which was a gallon or so of a transparent liquid.

"No' goin' treat me li' a dog. No."

The declaration was immediately followed by a crash and the tinkling of shattered glass.

The liquid splashed down the wall and over the floor at Tommy's side.

He felt a stinging sensation on his cheek and the back of his left hand, and

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the green fumes which rose when the stuff came in contact with some brass weights told him that it was nitric acid.

Tommy made a dash for water to the sink which was fitted in the far corner, but Herbie, still making senseless noises that were a hideous travesty of laughter, caught and held him.

With the acid seeming to burn deeper and deeper into his flesh, Tommy fought savagely against the maddening restraint from the relief that was almost within his reach.

He struggled towards the sink inch by inch, yelling at the idiot, who continued to hold him.

He had got his hand almost on the tap when suddenly Herbie yanked him clear away from it to the other side of the room.

There Herbie slipped and went sprawling into the pool of acid with Tommy on top of him, and a second later Herbie raised a wild shriek and went berserk.

His teeth bared, he gripped Tommy by the throat, and forced him backwards through the thickly rising fumes, and the youngster had almost abandoned hope of surviving the encounter when relief came.

### A Timely Entry.

**H**AWKE and Bostock rushed in by the back door, and the former, quickly apprehending the state of affairs, turned the water tap on, put his thumb under it and directed a jet of water on the struggling pair.

Tommy gasped with gratitude as the cold water relieved him of the stinging, itching pain that seemed as though it were eating its way into his innermost vitals.

Though obviously also relieved of his sufferings, Herbie relaxed his struggles for only a moment.

All three had to exert their maximum strength to hold him down, and then

when he had become temporarily exhausted, Tommy rushed to the phone and called the police.

"Evidently he had been in one of these fits when he pushed the old man down," said a police inspector when, presently, Herbie Hicks was being taken away.

Bostock agreed.

"I've been half afraid Herbie would turn out that way for some time," he said. "I've been watching those sulky fits of his, but, of course, didn't care to say anything until I had more definite proof."

Tommy watched his employer's sharply-defined, sensitive profile as he concentrated his attention on Bostock, as soon as the others had gone.

"I don't know that I'm quite so ready to agree with that theory," Hawke began.

Bostock shot him a peculiar glance and moved off to his private office.

Hawke waited for a second, and then stepped up to the office door, which he pushed open.

### The Raked Soil.

**B**OSTOCK was bending over his roll-top desk, and the detective addressed his back.

"I've no doubt you speak the truth, though, when you say you've been studying Hicks's sulky moods. They may have put ideas into your head, and suggested a possible scapegoat."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," said Bostock, after a slight pause.

"A careful checking of all the facts showed that not even the self-evident ones can always be trusted," said Hawke. "For instance, the rusty-looking patch on the back of Morgan's head did not come from the old 56 lb. weight on which it rested. It was not oxidized iron but copper sulphate, which had evidently arrived on his head by accident, but which very

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conveniently fitted in with the rest of the evidence as rust.

"Then there was the fact of the newly-raked garden. It didn't look to me like fertile soil, and I found that it had been raked but not dug. It was hard underneath. I thought the reason for the raking might have been to conceal the marks made by the dragging of the body from this room to the store. In any case, there were also traces of copper sulphate on the rake handle.

"Yet again," added Hawke, "I found it on the receiver in the public call-box from which the call was made to the police station.

"And as you, Mr Bostock, were admittedly using copper sulphate immediately prior to your father-in-law's death, it would seem that you have something to answer for."

When Bostock turned, which he did very slowly, after a long silence, there was a broad smile on his face, and Tommy saw that another of his acrobatic reversals of mood had taken place.

## A Strange Confession.

A sudden glimpse which Tommy had of a hypodermic syringe on the desk told the youth the story evidently already apparent to his chief. Bostock was a dope addict. "So you think I actually sought to incriminate myself?" he said.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Egotism. You probably looked on it as an artistic touch. You were so pleased with the meticulous attention which you had paid to detail—such as the laying of that spilt oil, the cracking of Morgan's elbow to suggest a fall, the placing of the weight to explain the fractured skull.

"Then," added Hawke, "you committed the sort of reckless blunder that dope will make a man do. That idea of having Herbie as a possible scape-

goat if foul play should be suspected suddenly came to the forefront and dominated you. Whereupon you overdid the artistic stuff."

Tommy was amazed to see Bostock nod in smiling agreement, and it was not until later that he realised that the dope he had just taken was responsible for the sublime assurance which brought about his undoing for the second time.

"You are shrewd, and I can be quite frank with you," he said, "for I assure you that you will never be able to prove anything."

This last statement proved that the man was drifting in a cloud of roseate dreams, from which he saw the world shaping itself to suit his ends.

## The Drug Addict.

BOSTOCK recounted a story of how he had taken to drugs to help him support a hollow sham, and save his dignity in the eyes of a cynical, hard-headed world.

The old, tumble-down shop which Morgan had run had actually made more money than all his chain of shops. Even Herbie, who touted for a book-maker as a sideline, had made more.

Bostock had resorted to all sorts of dodges to keep his shops financed, and he had had a great deal of money from Morgan.

It was his (Bostock's) wish to marry again, but this was going to involve the withdrawal of Morgan's support.

That was the situation which had ended in his tapping the old man over the back of the head with the pestle at a moment which seemed beautifully opportune, namely when Morgan was bending at the side of the dispensary bench to tie his shoe.

Later, within the confines of a cell, Bostock realised that his drug-inspired self-confidence had betrayed him into talking too freely, and swiftly his depression returned.

# THE CASE OF *The Widow's Dress*



**D**IXON HAWKE, skimming through the morning news, noted the headline without particular interest and would have passed on over the page.

The story was all too common. Two cars had met in violent collision on the Kingston By-Pass. The driver of one was dead. The driver of the other was found in a dazed state. The cars were written off as complete wrecks.

That was that! But it happened that a "Daily Telegram" reporter had spread himself on the subject of this road accident.

It made a good human-interest story, for the dead man had only been married that week.

John Player by name, he was a salesman employed by a firm of wholesalers, a man who had never done anything more interesting in his life than sell biscuits, but who made the front page of a newspaper with his death,

and incidentally provided Dixon Hawke with one of the knottiest problems of his career.

But the reporter didn't know anything about that when he mentioned Player's marriage to Jane Garnet, a pretty girl from some obscure town in the West Country.

By a smart bit of work, the reporter had got hold of a photograph, and there was her picture on the front page.

It was this picture that held Hawke's attention. His keen eyes rested on the pale, thin, pretty face, and his whole expression changed. He called Tommy Burke, his assistant.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"Not bad!" said the cheerful Tommy. "Not my type, though."

"Idiot!" said Hawke with a smile. "Don't you recognise her! Well, bring me the file for—let's see—June

## The Widow's Dress

1938. If my memory serves me right, this is really amazing, Tommy!"

Hawke took the bulky file that the young detective brought to him and flipped over the pages. Then he laid it on the table, open at a series of newspaper clippings and pictures.

### M'Phinney's Theory.

"GOSH!" said Tommy, for the same woman was pictured in the file, looking no younger, dressed in a very similar simple, cheap frock, but under this picture was pasted:

"Helen Dale, alias Gloria Vale, alias Sonia van Gartner, alias Torchy——" followed by a list of crimes that covered two full pages of typescript.

"Remember her now?" queried Hawke. "I knew her best as Torchy. She worked with the Baron and Pug, those artists in big crime. The three of them got away with the Baxter diamonds, Lady Hunter's pearls, the Van Dyke from the Louvre in Paris, and were suspected of countless more spectacular coups. Torchy is a queen of crooks, as hard as diamonds from her heels to her head, and she always goes for the big stuff, which makes me ask—why should she marry an insignificant, inoffensive biscuit salesman?"

Hawke repeated that question to Detective-Inspector M'Phinney at Scotland Yard a little while later.

"I'll agree, Hawke, that that picture in the paper is similar to the one of Torchy," replied M'Phinney cautiously, "but you're wasting your time and trying to waste mine. Torchy isn't in England. She, the Baron, and Pug were last heard of operating in the States, and they'll stay there for the duration of the war, for they value their skins."

"As for this motor accident," continued M'Phinney, "well, this young Player earned on an average four to five pounds a week in salary and commissions, which would put him at least forty pounds a week out of Torchy's

class. He was one of several million decent, ordinary folk of no concern to sleuths like us. And his wife's a fine girl of the same decent type. I was assigned to look into the case, and I've met her."

"So have I," retorted Hawke. "At our last meeting I was just in time to prevent her stealing an emerald necklace from a gentle old Duchess she had doped. Unfortunately she got away, and I have not been able to trace her since—until now. And now I want to know why she married this salesman."

"Love!" suggested M'Phinney sourly. "Perhaps she is in England, but is going straight, having fallen in love with an honest young man!"

"More likely insurance," snapped Hawke. "How much did Player carry?"

"A total of £500, and of course the car was covered," replied M'Phinney, looking through the reports on the case. "The £500 policy was taken out only a few days before the wedding, the sort of precaution a careful chap like Player would indulge in."

"Still more puzzling," commented Hawke. "Torchy and her mob—for I'll wager the Baron and Pug are in the offing—would starve rather than commit an inartistic crime, unworthy of their talents. To kill a husband for £500 insurance—no! Torchy wouldn't marry any man who spent less than that on the wedding breakfast! Mac, this is baffling! Let's go over and see the cars."

### The Smears On The Fence.

M'PHINNEY did not in the least want to go, but there was no gainsaying Hawke in his present mood, so before long the two detectives and Tommy Burke were at the scene of the accident.

The wreckage of the two cars had been towed to a garage nearby, but the skidmarks and other traces still showed on the road, and Hawke's experienced

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eyes could work out every detail of the smash.

At that point on the Kingston Bypass a minor road entered from the west, and it was apparent that Player's car had come along this into the main highway and had been struck by the other car, which was proceeding towards London.

Hawke paid little attention to the traces on the main highway, however, but walked thoughtfully away down the minor road. There he searched the surface with the most patient care, and even peered over the fence which lined it on each side.

Suddenly he came to a halt. He brought out a magnifying lens and examined some reddish-brown smears on the fence; then he sent Tommy post haste to the nearest chemist for a solution of leuco malachite green, glacial acetic acid, and distilled water, mixed with one per cent. solution of hydrogen peroxide.

### The Blood Test.

THE detective next scraped a small amount of the stain on to a piece of filter-paper and dropped a spot of the leuco malachite re-agent on to it. In a matter of seconds the dried reddish-brown matter first turned green and then dark greenish blue.

"Blood," said M'Phinney, for he knew this test to be the most sensitive of all preliminary tests for bloodstains; "but what of it? Probably someone out his hand climbing the fence."

"Quite so," agreed Hawke, "but if you look at the road you will agree that there are traces of someone having gone to the trouble of swabbing it clean. There has been no recent rain, and that clean patch is as tell-tale as if they had left the traces of a car standing here. They've gone to a lot of trouble to blot something out. But I'll explain that later. Now let's see Player's body, and then the wrecked car."

At the mortuary the police surgeon's report was handed to Hawke. There were superficial injuries, including cracked ribs, internal bruising and slight burning, but death was caused by an injury over the right eye. This was the result of a most severe blow which had split the skull and driven a fragment of splintered bone into the brain.

### The Wrong Bloodstains.

THE doctor thought it feasible that the frame of the windscreen was responsible for the blow, and traces to bear out this theory had been found on the heavy, sharp projection on the windscreen wiper of the wrecked car.

Hawke made no comment, but after seeing the body for himself, passed on to take a look at the cars. Then he turned swiftly on M'Phinney.

"The position of the bloodstains in the car settles the matter, Mac," he declared. "You and I have both seen many men struck over the eye, and we know that the blood would spurt from such a wound. Therefore we would expect to find the bloodstains on the glass of the triplex wind-screen—stains shaped something like exclamation marks. But what do we find here!—smears of blood, except for drops on the seat-cushion and floor. And there's not so much as there should be."

"No, Mac, this was no accident. Player was dead before the cars crashed. My theory is—and the clues here, on the body, and down that side road, all bear it out—that Player was killed by a blow over the head with some heavy implement. Then he was taken in his car to that side turning off the by-pass."

"There he was put behind the steering wheel. The engine was set racing, and the car was sent hurtling forward, timed to crash into a car that was seen coming at high speed along the by-pass—and all that means murder!"

## The Widow's Dress



Tommy burst into the room to find Hawke on the point of collapse.  
Could he beat the time machine?

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M'Phinney stared.

"You are certainly making out a case," he admitted, "but what possible motive could there be?"

"That's what we've got to find out," replied Hawke. "As the young woman named Torchby is involved, it means a particularly rich motive—which makes it strange that the victim should be this man, Player—and that is why I am going to ask you to do nothing at the moment. Leave this to me. If Torchby & Co. are mixed up in this, I have a shrewd idea what they will be doing at this moment, and I have a plan to use their natural caution against them. Whatever happens, don't stop the insurance company paying out on the widow's claim."

This final request puzzled M'Phinney, but Hawke's behaviour a short while later would have amazed the Scotland Yard detective even more.

### A Blow To Hawke!

HAWKE let the police car return to London while, after receiving special instructions, Tommy Burke set off in another direction; then the detective went to the junction of the minor road with the by-pass, where the accident had happened.

He began to search around there in a vague sort of way, finally climbing the fence and setting off across the open ground beyond towards a clump of trees.

There he began to ferret around, like a dog looking for a rabbit. He was bending down, peering into the undergrowth, when suddenly he heard a foot-step behind him.

He swung round and glimpsed an enormous man, with a grim, heavy-jawed face, standing over him.

"Wait!" exclaimed the detective, and jumped aside, but he was too late. The short, weighted club in the crook's hand smashed down on his unprotected head and felled him.

When Hawke recovered, he realised that the first part of his daring scheme had succeeded. He had counted on Torchby & Co. keeping a watch on the investigations at the roadside, and he had deliberately attracted their attention.

He was right. He found himself in a small room, and, glancing out of half-closed eyes, he saw those three artistes in crime—the Baron, Pug, and the lady of the newspaper photo, Torchby.

### A "Work Of Art."

THE men were cleverly disguised—the usually florid, humptious Baron as a meek, white-haired old man, and the enormous bruiser, Pug, had had the whole shape of his ugly face altered by a surgical operation—but they spoke in their normal voices and Hawke recognised them instantly.

"Good work, Pug!" the Baron was saying. "You sure put a scare into us when you phoned that Hawke was snooping around, and we didn't think you'd get him this easy."

"Never mind the bouquets for Pug," interposed Torchby sharply. "What happens next? Does this alter plans?"

"Why should it?" retorted the Baron; "All you have to do is to collect that insurance money, you poor little widow, while I keep Bentham up to the mark at the bank, and while Pug gets along with his digging."

"What about Hawke?" flashed Torchby. "Why didn't Pug put a bullet into him?"

"Because that would not be artistic enough," replied the Baron. "My dear Torchby, surely you hate Hawke enough to grudge him a swift, clean finish with a bullet! No, my dear! Pug brought him in so that we could finish him off properly. Everything is arranged. Look!"

Hawke had been listening and watching, but could say nothing and make no



## The Widow's Dress

movement because he was bound and gagged. He managed to raise his head enough to see where the Baron was pointing, but the only unusual object was a length of cord that hung down from the ceiling.

"Going to hang him, boss?" queried Pug, speaking for the first time.

"Now it is you who are being in-artistic, my dear Pug," replied the Baron. "Really, I sometimes despair of both of you. Haven't I told you that a crime must be a work of art to give any satisfaction? No, I am not going to hang Hawke. I am going to let him kill himself."

### The Leg Torture.

THE Baron looked round and saw that the detective was conscious. "Hello, hello! The old maestro awakes. Put him on the floor beneath that cord, Pug. Now unfasten his legs—careful, no kicking, Hawke! I've got you covered, you know! Now, Pug, fasten one leg to the staples you will see driven into the floor. That's it."

The Baron himself then stepped forward and lifted the detective's free leg until it was stretched high above the ground. Then he slipped the noose in the end of the cord round Hawke's ankle.

"Keep your leg up, Hawke," he warned. "The other end of that cord is fastened to a switch, which in its turn is fastened to a machine of my own contrivance. If you lower your leg the smallest fraction, jerking or pulling at the cord after I have turned the switch on my machine, there will be a vast explosion and this house and everything in it—including Dixon Hawke—will be blown to fragments! A delayed-action bomb left over from the last German raid, people will say—but you won't live to hear them."

The Baron laughed.

"An artistic touch, eh, Hawke? You

can lie there and think for just as long as you have the strength to keep your foot raised. The moment you lower it—exit Dixon Hawke!"

The crooks left the detective a few moments later. He heard the sound of a door closing, and then their footsteps receding along a passage. Quietly he considered his position. He knew that there was no bluff about what the Baron had said.

His life now depended upon the strength in his leg. He must keep it stretched unwaveringly upwards.

Strong though Hawke was, his muscles soon began to ache. His foot seemed as heavy as lead, and cramped pains began to run along his legs and back. It needed every atom of concentration to keep the foot still, for if he let his mind stray for an instant, the muscles in his leg would relax.

He clenched his teeth on the gag, while beads of sweat began to form along his forehead. The strain was setting every nerve in his body on edge, and he realised that he could not stand it much longer.

### A Terrible Ordeal.

MINUTES seemed like hours. They seemed to stretch and stretch until Hawke felt he had lain there for an eternity. He couldn't hold out much longer. His foot twitched. Desperately he forced it into steadiness again.

Somewhere near at hand he could hear a steady ticking, which he guessed came from the explosive machine that the Baron had switched on. A strange, agonising throbbing which ran down his raised leg, along his back and all through him, as every nerve protested at the strain, seemed to beat in time to that ticking.

Then suddenly Hawke's pain-dimmed eyes brightened. In his excitement he almost forgot to keep his foot still. Somewhere outside the room, not far

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away, he could hear light footsteps. He listened. They were coming towards him. He heard them reach the door. Then they passed on.

Hawke's teeth hit into the gag. He knew that tread. Tommy Burke had obeyed orders and kept on the trail, following his master. Tommy was in the house now, searching, but unless he found Hawke within a few moments, he would be too late—and he also would be destroyed in the explosion—for Hawke's nerves and muscles could stand no more. He could keep his leg up no longer.

But, somehow, he found reserves of strength. His teeth hitting into his gag, his face twisted with agony, he kept his foot raised for what seemed hours longer.

But when at last Tommy Burke located the room and burst in, he only just switched off the machine and freed his master's foot in time as Hawke collapsed.

### A Clean-Up.

TWO hours later, Hawke was himself again. With M'Phinney and Tommy he drove to the house where the widow of John Player was living.

"Mrs Player can see nobody. She is busy with a gentleman from the insurance company," declared the white-haired old man who introduced himself as her father when M'Phinney alone presented himself at the door. But then Hawke sprang forward.

"The game's up, Baron!" he snapped. "You see, you couldn't finish me off!"

The Baron snatched out a gun, but Tommy was waiting for that and knocked it out of his hand. The Baron fought furiously, but was overpowered by force of numbers, and the detectives entered the house to be met by Scotland Yard men who had been covering the back exit, and who had collected Torchy and Pug when they made a dash for it.

"You've got nothing against us.

We're trying to go straight," screamed Torchy desperately, but Hawke quietly shook his head.

"On the contrary, you are planning to rob Stephens' Bank in the city," he retorted. "You see, I have worked it all out from three words that I overheard when you left me prisoner. The words were 'insurance,' 'Bentham,' and 'bank,' and I have just inquired at all the banks to discover one that employs a man called Bentham. Stephens' Bank employs a Frank Bentham as a night guard in the vaults."

### Hawke Explains.

THE baffled expressions on the faces of the crooks showed that the detective was on the right track, and he went on inexorably:

"You landed in England broke, didn't you? But you know there was a big sum at Stephens'. You got in touch with Bentham, who was in need of money, and he agreed to let you into the vaults for a first payment of £500. You hadn't £500, and you are too artistic to crack a small crib to get it, so you, Torchy, married young Player, had him insured for the sum, and then murdered him, faking it to look like a car crash. The moment the insurance company paid up, you would pass the money on to Bentham and he would let you into the vaults to do your usual clever work on the strong-room. Simple, smart and artistic, Torchy, but you wrecked the scheme."

"Me!" screamed the woman crook. "What do you mean?"

"Just that you were careless," snapped Hawke. "When you required to disguise yourself as a simple girl, you weren't original. The dress which you chose was an absolute copy of that one you wore in 1838 for the part of governess to the Westlake children when you robbed their mother of her jewels! That was your mistake. An artist should always be original, Torchy!"

## THE CASE OF

# The Silver Salver



**B**RRR-RRRR!

The telephone on Dixon Hawke's desk rang sharply, and the famous criminologist lifted it. After a pause, a man's deep voice came from the other end of the wire.

"Hello, Dixon Hawke! Good, glad I've found you in, Hawke! This is—"

"Chief Inspector Blair, of the Yard," said Hawke, promptly. "I wouldn't have to think twice about that voice."

Blair laughed a little.

"Quite right, Hawke! Well, I'm in a bit of a difficulty—nothing very much, mind you, but it's the kind of case that I think would interest you. It concerns the silver burglaries—we've had a lot of them lately."

"I've read about them in the Press," said Hawke.

"Oh, good man! Not much that

you miss, is there? Well, there's been another one at the house belonging to Colonel Desmond, Crow Hill, Richmond. He says he had a valuable collection, and some of it was stolen last night.

He's been complaining about the slowness of the police, and said that amateurs could do better." Blair laughed again. "As a matter of fact, I was a bit nettled, and I told him I'd send a private detective to investigate if he preferred it. And—"

Dixon Hawke chuckled delightedly.

"Having made the promise, you've got to keep it!"

"Well—I did think you might pick up something about the jobs," said Blair. "Can you go along?"

"Yes," said Hawke promptly. "I'm interested in the robberies right enough. I'll go and see the gentleman."

"Thanks a lot," said Blair. "Always glad to co-operate, you know!"

He rang off and Hawke chuckled to himself. Blair was a good and capable officer, but somewhat jealous of the Yard's reputation. Colonel Den-

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mond must have put him into a considerably bad temper to make him talk about consulting a private detective.

Hawke was glad of the opportunity, however. He was intrigued by the series of thefts which had taken place in London, and many other parts of the country.

### In The Vault.

IT was a fine spring morning when Hawke and his assistant, Tommy Burke, went by car to Richmond. They discussed the silver robberies as they rode.

There was one peculiar thing about them. Nothing but silver was stolen. Sometimes the houses broken into had been packed with other valuables, many of them more easily moved than heavy silver plate. But nothing but the white metal had been touched.

Crow Hill was a large, private house, near Richmond Park. A pleasant Georgian building, the sun shone over the garden and house to show it to the best advantage.

A neatly-dressed maid opened the door, and in a few moments Hawke and Tommy were ushered into Colonel Desmond's presence.

Desmond was a big, bluff man, well past sixty. With him was a tall dark-haired, youngish man, introduced as "My secretary, Carter."

Desmond cleared his throat, and went on in his abrupt way. "Glad to see you, Hawke. Police said you were coming. Heard a lot about you. Now this is serious—the silver was worth five hundred pounds, and much of it has been handed down generation after generation in my family. According to the police there isn't much chance of finding it. Police—pshaw! You can do better than them I hope."

"Let me know all the circumstances, please," said Hawke.

"Only myself and my daughter—and Carter, of course—have keys. The vault's in the cellar—I'll show it you."

The cellar was surprisingly clean and well-lighted. In one corner a section had been bricked off, and there was a narrow door built into it. Desmond opened the door with a key, while Tommy and Carter watched over Hawke's shoulder.

Inside were some small objets d'art and a few jewel-cases. They had not been touched, although a case filled with silver had been lifted and taken away.

One piece of plate—a silver salver—had been left behind. Hawke saw that it was a fine specimen and worth all of two hundred pounds.

"Practically all that I had is gone," said Desmond. "Five hundred pounds' worth—a lot to lose."

"I hardly need to be told that," said Hawke sympathetically. "What time was the burglary?"

"Between twelve o'clock last night and six this morning. I put some stuff in myself at twelve, and the servants found the door open at six. Had the police here by seven."

"That was quick work," commented Hawke. "Now the keys—the door appears to have been opened by one."

"Or by a pick-lock," put in Carter quickly.

"Oh, yes, a pick-lock could have been used, although if one of the keys is missing, that would simplify things."

"All of them are here," declared Desmond. "Mine is always in my pocket—so is Carter's. Julie, that's my daughter, keeps hers in her handbag. It was there this morning."

"The thief could have visited one of your rooms, and borrowed the key," said Hawke.

"Eh!" Desmond looked startled. "Didn't think of that."

"It surely isn't likely," said Carter sharply.

"I don't know," replied Hawke. "There are no scratches on the lock, and no matter how carefully a cracksmen works, he usually leaves one or two scratches on the inside. Do you all sleep with your doors locked?"

## The Silver Salver

"I do," said Carter quickly.

"Julie doesn't," declared Desmond.

"I look mine when I think of it—ha-ha! Thought of it last night, too. Like to look at the rooms!"

"Yes, please," said Hawke, and a few minutes afterwards examined the locks of the doors. None of them showed any signs of a forced entry.

### Tommy Gets A Job.

As they went downstairs, a girl's laugh came from the hall, and there they met Julie Desmond, with a lieutenant in uniform. A fine, good-looking youngster, thought Hawke and the young couple looked well-suited.

Desmond introduced them.

The officer's name was White, and he was on a forty-eight hours' leave before going "somewhere abroad."

In answer to Hawke's question, Julie said: "I suppose someone could have entered my room and taken the key, but I'm a very light sleeper and I don't imagine they would be able to do it. Why are you so sure that a key was used?"

"I always like to believe the simplest explanation," answered Hawke and smiled when Carter said sharply:

"It seems to complicate things more than simplify them."

"Appearances are always deceptive," answered Hawke. "Well, Colonel, leave this to me for an hour or two, will you?"

"Demmit—what are you going to do!"

"Think," smiled Hawke. "And find from the police whether they have their eyes on anyone."

He left the house soon afterwards, and Tommy chuckled as he slammed the door of the car.

"I think the Colonel expected you to wave a wand and say 'hey presto! But, gov'nor, what do you make of Carter?

He's a sinister-looking customer, isn't he?"

"He is," said Hawke decisively. "And you're going to watch him, old son. We mustn't forget that whoever stole that silver knew exactly where it was stored. They had to get into the house, force the cellar door, and then open the specially-built vault—for a vault is what it amounts to. Someone with a good knowledge of the lay-out of the house entered there. Of course, it could be the servants, but Carter did his best to be obstructive, didn't he?"

"I thought so," said Tommy. He looked about the street in which Crow Hill was situated. "There are plenty of gardens for me to hide in, gov'nor. Do I start watching right away?"

"Yes. And follow Carter if and when he goes out. If there's anything at all suspicious, telephone me."

"I won't lose much time doing that," Tommy promised.

### Attack From Behind!

To make sure that he was not observed from the house of Colonel Desmond, Tommy went with Hawke in the car to Richmond Bridge, and then walked back.

Tommy was trying to tell himself that he was wrong to have taken a sharp dislike to Carter. Hawke was always reminding him that he was apt to judge too hastily by appearances. But this time, at least, Hawke was apparently in sympathy with his assistant's judgment.

He was half-an-hour outside the house before a two-seater left it, with Julie and her fiance. They were both smiling and waving to someone on the porch—Desmond, almost certainly.

Tommy, using a small shrubbery, kept by the local council, to hide in, could see the back as well as the front entrance, and as the council had thoughtfully provided a bench, he was able to maintain his vigil in comparative comfort.

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No one else came from the house, and by afternoon Tommy was beginning to feel ravenously hungry. He had somehow taken it for granted that Carter would go out fairly early, but he appeared to have been considerably mistaken. He walked up and down for a few minutes, eyed the nearest shop and decided that he would take a chance and buy a snack.

He was away for no more than ten minutes, and he had been able to keep the front of the house in sight all the time.

Confident that Carter had not slipped him, he sat down on the bench and enjoyed two pork pies. He was breaking off a piece of chocolate which he had also managed to get, when he heard a movement behind him, and half-turned.

Not until then did he realise that there was danger. He saw a man coming from behind one of the shrubs, and he also saw a second fellow, lurking amongst the bushes.

The heavy, ugly face was twisted in a grin that certainly was not of humour, and one leathery hand was lifted. In it was a rubber oosh, probably lead-weighted.

Tommy desperately leapt to his feet.

But he was too late to avoid the brutal blow, which caught him with a sickening thud on the nape of the neck. He heard a low-pitched laugh, and then he lost consciousness.

The shrubbery, which had hidden him from anyone in Crow Hill, had provided equally good cover for his assailants. The second man came from the shrubs, and together they dragged Tommy away. There was no need to take him far.

"Nosey little tyke," muttered one man. "Deserves to get more'n a k.o., he does."

"Leave him be," said the other. "We don't want a murder rap! 'Ere, tie 'is 'ands an' 'feet, so's 'e can't do any damage for an hour, and stuff something in 'is mouth."

The other obeyed. Tommy was bound and gagged, and then they pushed him still further under the shrubs, so that there was no chance of him being seen by passers-by, or by anyone who was using the shrubbery.

### The Counterfeiters' Den.

THE two men moved away together, and some twenty minutes afterwards a small car left Desmond's house. Carter was driving.

He stared towards the shrubbery, and there was a sardonic smile on his lips as he drove on towards London.

In Hammersmith, he went into a side street and pulled up outside a small house. The door was opened to his knock, and the bigger of the two men who had attacked Tommy stood there.

"Okay!" he asked aggressively.

"Yes, you did well," said Carter. "But we mustn't lose any time. If that young fool comes round, he'll manage to attract attention somehow. Where's the stuff?"

"Dahnstairs," said the burly one.

Carter followed him into a cellar that was filthy and unused—very different from that at Colonel Desmond's. Hidden beneath a pile of sacking in one corner was the silver taken from Desmond's house.

There was other silver, also—small pieces; the proceeds of other robberies. Then Carter opened a door which he was able to move only with difficulty. A blast of heat-laden air greeted him.

In the centre of the room was a big cauldron, over a red-hot fire. Inside the cauldron was molten silver, and the man attending to it was putting other pieces in, filling the melting-pot almost to over-flowing.

In one corner was a rough bench, and some plaster casts. A dozen or more halfcrowns were cooling off on the bench—counterfeit coins, although

# The Silver Salver

made with real silver and an alloy.

"How is it going?" demanded Carter. "We want that other stuff used up to-day."

"I can't do more'n I'm doin' now," growled the man by the cauldron. "I'll see it's all melted down afore I leave, an' that's all I can say."

"See that you do," said Carter. "We're going to move pretty soon—or at least I am." He laughed a little. "I've one more visit to make to Desmond's place, and then I'm through with the 'gentleman secretary' stunt."

"If you slings your 'ook like that the dicks will be on to you," said the other sharply. "Don't you take any chances, Carter."

"Don't worry—I know what I'm doing," said Carter with a smile. "I've got Desmond eating out of my hand. But Hawke and his assistant have been called in, and that's time for me to disappear. They're on to me already, I think."

"Spike was tellin' me what happened. Take it slow, that's what I advise—take it slow. That Hawke's dangerous, and 'is kid ain't much easier to handle."

"Spike's looked after him," said Carter confidently, and he turned out of the cellar. The doors closed behind him and he hurried up the stairs.

When he reached the street and climbed into his car, he noticed nothing of the man at the far end of the street who was watching him.

But as the car started off, Dixon Hawke's car drove in its wake.

## A Surprise Arrest.

HAWKE had been watching the house as well as Tommy, and had seen most of what had happened. He had seen Tommy attacked and sent help at once. Then he followed Carter and was waiting for him. He drove at a safe distance in Carter's rear, and the journey lasted no longer than three-quarters of an

hour, for Carter returned to Crow Hill.

Hawke paid a visit to a telephone booth, and then followed to the house.

When Hawke was announced, Carter was with Desmond.

"Hallo, there!" barked Desmond. "Done that thinking, Hawke? I'm rather busy—just going into some details with Carter."

"Details of what?" asked Dixon Hawke quietly.

"Nothing to do with you," retorted Desmond. "Oh, suit yourself! I'm preparing an insurance claim, if you must know!"

"I shouldn't go into details with Carter," said Hawke slowly. "I've just followed him to and from a house in Hammersmith. He was admitted by a man who had just previously attacked and knocked out my assistant. Carter has a lot to explain."

Carter's face was drained of colour.

"What the deuce are you talking about—"

"I'm accusing you of complicity in the theft of silver," said Hawke, and as Carter made a move towards him, he slipped an automatic from his pocket. Carter drew up short. "That's better—and wise," said Hawke. "Your game's up, Carter, but there is one thing we can do yet. Colonel Desmond, why were you so impatient with the police?"

Desmond stared at him.

"I wanted the stuff back, of course. The police—pshaw! Just a lot of time-wasting officials. They're so slow, it's painful. I—why shouldn't I be impatient, anyhow?"

Hawke shrugged.

"It struck me as curious, Colonel, did you know that somewhere in London there are the headquarters of a gang stealing silver, and probably melting it down to sell as bullion, or by mixing an alloy to make counterfeit coins? The police have been searching for those headquarters for a long time. I have been taking an interest in the case, and I've met a number of collectors. They have silver to the value

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of ten or fifteen thousand pounds very often. You say that half your collection was stolen, and value it at five hundred pounds. In short, you don't know what the value of old silver is—you've valued it purely and simply on its weight. That's a peculiar thing for a collector to do."

Desmond was on his feet, glaring.

"What the devil are you trying to say?"

"I'm asking for an explanation!" snapped Hawke. "I saw a small salver of silver in your cellar, a piece stolen a few weeks ago. A piece that any silver collector would have recognised as being worth every shilling of two hundred pounds. What is stolen silver doing there?"

Desmond drew a sharp breath and then swung round on Carter. His face was livid.

"You—you bally fool! You told me all that stuff was cleared out, you——"

He looked about to spring on the man, but Hawke's gun moved towards him.

"Keep where you are, Desmond! Carter—you've taken orders from Desmond, haven't you? He's the leader of the gang—this is the clearing-house of the stolen plate. Isn't that right?"

"Y-yes!" gasped Carter. "I didn't know you'd thought of him! If there was trouble, I was to take the rap, and he was to look after me when I came out! He put me up to it, I had to do it——"

"That's more than enough," said Hawke. "I—ah, the police, I think."

There was a heavy footstep outside, and then Blair came in.

"Hawke, what the deuce is happening? I've had your telephone message to come here, straight to this room. Why?"

Hawke smiled.

"Because your gang's here, Blair, Desmond leads it and Carter has confessed. Have you sent men to raid that address I gave you in Hammermith?"

"Yes, of course."

"You'll probably find the workshop there, and some stolen stuff" said Hawke. "Desmond will try to deny it, of course, but he's made an admission, and Carter is ripe for a full confession."

Desmond snarled:

"You devil, Hawke! If Carter hadn't been careless and left some stuff here you'd never have thought of me!"

"I thought of you when you were so difficult with the police, and when you so grossly under-valued old silver plate, I was quite sure of you. As for Carter's carelessness—it needn't worry you. I wasn't sure whether the silver salver left in the safe was stolen or not—I just chanced it to force your admission."

Afterwards, Tommy Burke, who had been resting for some time at the local police station, where Hawke had arranged for help to reach him, said to Hawke:

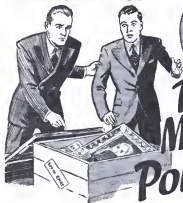
"It'll be a bad blow for Julie Desmond, gur'nor."

"Ye-es," admitted Hawke. "But it had to come sooner or later, and it's better it came now. Criminals never keep safe indefinitely, old son—it's impossible to cheat the law all the time."





# THE CASE OF



## The Missing Portrait

"HERE we are," said Gordon Kaye as Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke approached a green-painted house on the outskirts of London. "If you'll stop, I'll jump out and open the gates, and we'll drive right up."

"No, don't worry," said Hawke. "The gate's a bit narrow, and I don't want to knock it about. We'll walk up together—lock the car up, Tommy, will you?"

Tommy took out the car key, while Hawke and Kaye went up to the small gateway.

As they opened it, a loud barking started at the other end of the carriage-way, and Tommy saw a lithe brown dog racing towards the gate and barking furiously.

As the dog, a mongrel with more than a touch of Alsatian in it, reached Hawke and the other man, it leapt upwards, teeth bared in an ugly snarl.

Hawke knew how to handle animals, but he had a momentary impression that this dog was really dangerous.

"Get down, Troy!" Gordon Kaye raised his voice, and also a hand, as if to knock the dog back. "Get down, you brute!"

Then Tommy reached the gate and provided a diversion. Troy turned his attention to the youngster, and for a few moments he had to keep the gate between him and the barking mongrel. He talked to it quietly, and the barking subsided.

Troy actually wagged his tail, and from the porch of the house Hawke and Kaye saw that Tommy and the dog were likely to be good friends.

"He never did like strangers," said Kaye, who was a big, young-looking but middle-aged, man with clean-cut, handsome features. "But I think he'll be all right now. Well, here we are—and I can't tell you how glad I am that you've been able to come. The robbery has upset my sister terribly. And between you and me, the police are pretty clumsy, and they seem to have no consideration for our feelings."

Hawke smiled a little grimly.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"They are somewhat forthright at times I know. Who has been out here?"

"Didn't I tell you?" Kaye, who had called at Hawke's Dover Street flat two hours before and asked for his assistance, opened the front door with a key. "A Sergeant Bramley—decent enough fellow, I suppose, but rather abrupt. I'm inclined to wish I'd come to see you before going to them."

"They would have had to know about it," said Hawke, "although I have lost twenty-four hours, and the scent's probably grown cold."

### The Stolen Pictures.

THEY stepped into the pleasantly furnished hall of a small modern villa. The garden, extending to about half-an-acre, was surrounded with a high cypress hedge, and only the hedge was visible from the ground-floor windows.

"Well, I hope you'll work quicker than Bramley, in spite of the delay," Kaye said. "Shall we go up to the library first?"

"If it would suit to you, I'd like to meet your sister," said Hawke.

"Of course. I expect she's in here." Kaye opened the door of a small lounge, but the room was empty. "That's queer," added Kaye. "She's usually here in the afternoon. Let's go upstairs. We might find her in her room."

But they did not. Kaye, Hawke and Tommy, who had finished a firm friend with Troy, searched the house without result. Kaye looked really worried and he murmured—

"She really shouldn't go out on her own—I've told her so several times."

"I expect she's taken a walk because the afternoon is so pleasant," smiled Hawke. "She'll be back. And since I can't meet her first, we'll see the scene of the robbery."

"Right you are." Kaye led the way upstairs with long strides, and opened the door of a small, well-furnished study-cum-library.

To Hawke's quick eye there was evidence in plenty that the police had been there. Traces of finger-print powder were to be seen on the furniture, and particularly on the handle and door of a safe set in a wall opposite the window.

"The thief climbed in at the window," said Kaye, and drew Hawke's attention to some scratches on the paint, and others on the window catch.

"The police say he wore gloves, as there are no finger prints anywhere."

"Professional thieves wouldn't leave prints in any case," said Hawke. "How much was stolen, did you say?"

"About two hundred pounds in notes, several small items of jewellery—all my sister's—and several small and valuable ornaments. Two or three pictures also—my aunt, who lived here up to her death a month ago, once had a valuable collection, but most of it was sold before her death."

"I see," said Hawke. He looked about the walls, seeing the unfaded patches where pictures had been hanging. "Four of them were taken, were they?"

Kaye chuckled. "Actually only three pictures of any value went—unless the thief had a liking for me! My photograph was in that corner, and that was taken, too."

Hawke frowned a little and said—

"That suggests the man worked with a poor light."

"Yes—the police said so," agreed Kaye. "Well, here's the safe. Everything is cleared out as you can see—except for a few War Savings Certificates. They wouldn't take them as they could be traced."

Hawke nodded, and examined the safe. It was an old-fashioned one, built into the wall, and opened with a key. Any expert cracksmen could have opened it without much difficulty. There were few scratches, however, although of course, a pick-lock would show its usage inside the lock.

A furious harking began outside. Hawke looked out of the window over-

## The Missing Portrait

looking the drive, and he saw a man and a woman approaching.

Troy was still barking furiously, but quietened after a few seconds.

Gordon Kaye, just behind Hawke, said slowly—

"So that's where she's been. One of these days Martin and I are going to quarrel."

"Who is Martin?" asked Hawke.

"He's a friend of my sister's—or he pretends to be. He's one of those people who get very friendly when they smell money, Mr Hawke. Cecilia and I had very little to manage on before we inherited here, and Martin was no more than a casual acquaintance. Cecilia's trouble is that she goes whichever way the wind blows. Martin can talk her into doing anything, even against her will, but she soon realises that it's not wise to follow his advice."

### The Art-Dealer's Visit.

HAWKE and Tommy exchanged glances while the newcomers entered the house. Kaye was half-way down the stairs to meet them, while the detective and his assistant stayed on the top landing.

They saw that Cecilia Kaye was an exceptionally good-looking woman, but she seemed pale and ill. Beside her, the man named Martin looked the picture of health. Ruddy-faced, dark, with a tinge of grey in his hair, and with fine grey eyes, he walked with a military manner and yet with a decided limp.

"Hullo, Gordon!" He seemed to be on good enough terms with Kaye. "Cecilia's been telling me about the bother. I suppose I can see the police in the background!"

"No," said Kaye. "That's Mr Dixon Hawke and his assistant—I wasn't satisfied with the way the police were handling the job, and it wants clearing up. So I consulted him."

Martin nodded curtly to the others.

"Heard of you," he said. "Can't

say I see much here that calls for a specialist—the police ought to manage it easily."

"Well, they're not doing so," snapped Kaye.

"Well, it's none of my business," said Martin.

"I'm glad you realise that," said Kaye tartly, and Cecilia flushed. It was clear that she was aware that her friend's presence was unwelcome. She answered Hawke's questions freely enough, however, although he still had an idea that she was nervous, if not mentally ill.

Martin showed no signs of going.

In the drawing-room Hawke said quietly—

"Well, now, I think I have the essentials of the robbery. The night before last the study was broken open, the safe rifled, valuable ornaments and pictures were stolen. The total loss is around a thousand pounds."

"That's right," said Kaye. "There's another thing which I told you at your flat. We had a visitor a few days ago—an art dealer who wanted to buy up the treasures. I disliked the little beggar, and soon sent him about his business. The police think he might be implicated."

"Precisely," broke in Martin. "The police are doing all that's necessary. The dealer managed this job all right, and they'll find out. If you'd taken my word for the value of the things this wouldn't have happened."

Kaye hit back a sharp retort.

Hawke eyed Martin with a fresh interest.

"Are you a judge of valuable objects, Mr Martin?"

"I've collected small things all my life. Gordon preferred to pay a ten-guinea fee to have the things valued, and lost 'em all in the bargain." Martin smiled a little as if the thought amused him, and then stood up. "Well, I'll be going. 'Bye, Cecilia, I'll see you to-morrow."

He nodded curtly to the others, and

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

let himself out. There was silence in the room for some minutes until it was broken by the shutting of the gate.

### Hawke Gets A Hint.

**W**HATEVER Hawke thought about Martin's manner, he kept only to himself. He made his excuses soon afterwards, and drove with Tommy to the local police headquarters. On the way Tommy asked—

"What do you make of it, Gur'nor? Martin's a queer fellow, isn't he? And there's no love lost between him and Kaye!"

"There certainly isn't," said Hawke. "But why say that Martin is queer?"

"Well, he seemed mighty anxious to point out that you needn't bother yourself with the case."

"Ye-es, I thought that," agreed Hawke. "Anyhow, we'll see what Bramley has to say."

Detective-Sergeant Bramley, who was looking after the case, was a tall, thin, abrupt-mannered man.

He greeted Hawke and Tommy without enthusiasm, but had no objection to telling them what he had done and what he thought. The dealer who had valued the missing valuables was a London man named Gunther. Gunther had a perfectly sound reputation, and despite suggestions from Kaye and Martin, there was no reason to believe that the dealer knew anything about the theft.

Gunther, in fact, had allowed his shop and store-room to be searched. Nothing had been found.

Hawke smiled a little. "I gathered at the house that you rather suspected Gunther."

Bramley shrugged. "I don't let them see everything, believe me. I've a shrewd idea who the thief is, and I hope to prove it within a day or two. He's bound to make a false move."

Hawke leaned back a little in his chair.

"You mean Martin, of course?"

"No names, no pack-drill," answered Bramley evasively. "But I'll go so far as to admit that it's one of these cases where I wish I didn't need a search-warrant to look in another man's house!"

Hawke and Tommy left soon afterwards. Tommy's eyes showed some excitement, and as soon as they were in the car he said—

"Bramley's on to Martin all right. And I fancy he gave you a hint, gur'nor! We can take a chance and look in his house without a search-warrant."

Hawke looked grave.

"Yes, we could do that. It's a peculiar business, Tommy, and I don't know that we've got the right angle yet. Anyhow, we'll find where Martin lives, and we'll look him up."

Martin lived on his own in a small house near the Kayes. A daily-woman kept house for him, and as he was often out, the house was frequently empty. Hawke discovered these things by discreetly questioning a local shopkeeper.

As they came out of the shop, Tommy said with conviction—

"It's being thrown at us, gur'nor! I suggest that we try to find if Martin's in, and if he's not, have a quick look through the house. It wouldn't take half-an-hour, and we could manage it without any trouble after dark. No one would see us."

"Supposing Martin did take the things," said Hawke. "Would his conviction make Cecilia Kaye happy or unhappy? She's the key to this business, Tommy. It may not be as straightforward as you think. That woman is in trouble, and it's my opinion that she's in love with Martin."

"And her brother's trying to force her to break off the association," said Tommy. "But, gur'nor—if Martin's worth having, he wouldn't steal her jewels, or anything at all, for that matter. You've often told me that the truth never does any damage if it's handled properly."

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Hawke smiled, but Tommy felt that he was not happy about the case. Nor was he. Hawke was worried less by the robbery than by the effect of it on the lovely woman with the sad, anxious eyes. And he believed that Kaye had consulted him to try to discover whether Martin was behind it.

"All right," he said decisively. "We'll pay a furtive visit to Martin's house after dark to-night, old son. I think you like forcing entries! You should have been apprenticed to a crackman!"

"I get all the experience I want with you, thanks," said Tommy.

## Caught Red-Handed!

IT was pitch dark that night. There was no moon, and the stars were hidden by low clouds. Some-time after nine o'clock Hawke and Tommy knocked on the door of Martin's house, but received no answer. They did not expect one, for Tommy had been watching the house since the late afternoon, and Martin had gone out about six o'clock and had not returned.

Clearly he had not expected to be back early, for he had drawn all the black-out curtains before leaving. Thus, after Tommy had lifted a catch in a downstairs window and crept through, he was able to switch on the lights.

He admitted Hawke—they had parked their car some distance away—and then they began a quick search of the house. That Martin collected valuable objets d'art was quickly obvious.

Hawke tried a cupboard under the stairs. It was locked, but the lock gave him little trouble. He found a big packing case standing inside it, also locked with keys and padlock. That, too, was soon opened, and he threw back the lid.

A single glance was enough to show that the stolen goods were there! Several small jewel cases—a wad of five-pound notes—and three fair-sized

paintings by well-known artists. Tommy drew in a sharp breath.

"So it was Martin, guv'nor! We were right to come!"

"Ye-es." Hawke looked puzzled. "Three pictures are here, but not the photograph. I——"

He stopped abruptly, for a sound came from the front door. There was little time for them to do anything, for Martin came in quickly, and before they could get into one of the rooms he had switched on the light.

He stood staring at the two intruders, his face very pale.

"What the deuce are you doing here!" he demanded. "I've a jolly good mind to thrash the two of you!"

He moved forward quickly in spite of his limp, and Tommy just evaded a powerful blow to the face. Tommy was ready to jump into a scrap, but Hawke's voice checked him.

"We've no right here, Mr Martin, but we've a good reason. Mr Kaye hired us to find the stolen goods. We have done so—they're in this house."

Martin drew back, his eyes wide and incredulous.

"They're here! But that's impossible, I——"

He stopped abruptly, and Tommy said sharply:

"You didn't manage to get rid of them in time, eh!"

"I tell you I've never——"

He stopped again, this time because of a sharp ring at the front door bell.

## A Starting Revelation.

AFTER a moment's hesitation Tommy opened the door. Gordon Kaye stepped in, pulling up short when he saw Hawke.

"I—I didn't expect to see you here! What on earth——"

He stopped, for from the cupboard Hawke had taken one of the pictures. "Great Scott, that's mine! Martin—so you stole them!"

"You filthy swine!" swore Martin,

## Dixon Hawke's Case—Book No. 7

and he leapt at Kaye. Tommy weighed in, but for some minutes the melee seemed likely to end either way.

Finally Hawke and Tommy parted them, and the two men glared at each other, breathing heavily.

"So that's the racket," Kaye snapped. "You make up to my sister and then rob her. Of all the foul things to do, that's about the worst. Hawke, have you told the police?"

"Not yet," said Hawke.

"Then the quicker Martin's under arrest the better!"

"I'm not so sure," said Hawke. "One queer thing has happened, Kaye. Your photograph, which the thief stole 'by mistake,' according to you, is missing. Had it been here I should have thought Martin the thief. But he would have no reason for getting rid of that. You might have.

"I thought from the first that the photograph was one of the keys to the problem. Why did you move it, Kaye?"

"It—it's a lie! I don't know a thing about it!"

"Don't you? Didn't you stage the robbery yourself, meaning to get rid of the photograph at all costs? Didn't you also mean to implicate Martin to make sure he was sent to prison?"

Kaye was breathing very deeply, and he had lost every vestige of colour. But he managed to answer:

"I tell you it's nonsense! Why should I steal my own goods?"

"That's what you've been relying on to keep you clear of suspicion," said Hawke sharply. "I can answer the question though, or I'm far mistaken. They aren't your goods! You and your sister were supposed to have inherited them from your aunt, who died a month ago, but actually I think you're an impostor, Kaye!"

"It—it's preposterous!"

"Is it! Her nephew would presumably be a frequent visitor—but her dog, Troy, a friendly enough animal, hates the sight of you. That suggests you're a stranger. Troy behaved all

right with Martin, and with Tommy—but not with you or your sister.

"If he will accept some strangers, he would certainly welcome an old friend and regular visitor, but he senses something wrong with you. The photograph of the real nephew would have given you away. You had to destroy it. But you were afraid that if Martin grew too friendly with your sister she would confide in him. She hates this deception, but you have made her help you.

"Then you saw a way of getting rid of the photograph so that no one would be puzzled, and of disposing of Martin, a potential danger. You didn't stand to lose anything, for sooner or later you would put me on to Martin, and you knew the goods would be found. Well, Kaye. How far wrong am I?"

Kaye swung towards the door, and that was answer enough. But Martin was waiting for him, and sent him staggering against the wall. Kaye slumped to the floor—and then broke down and confessed that Hawke was right.

Afterwards it transpired that the real nephew had died recently.

The aunt had no other relations, and Kaye, an acquaintance of the nephew, had conceived the plan to masquerade as him. Cecilia had been the chief obstacle.

On her own he could force her to do what he wanted, but her attachment to Martin had spelt danger.

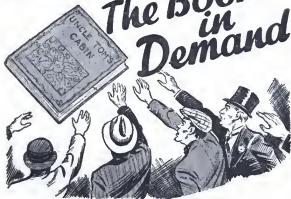
At the trial which followed, Cecilia was not sentenced, but her brother "went down" for three years. At the door of the court Martin was waiting for the woman, and Hawke and Tommy joined them after a few minutes.

The woman's eyes were glowing.

"I can't thank you enough, Mr Hawke. Gordon has always lived by crime—I can't feel sorry for him. But you have saved me from a life of torment and Martin from imprisonment."

Hawke smiled. "Don't thank me, Miss Kaye. Thank Troy—his attitude made me first suspect that something was far wrong."

# THE CASE OF *The Book* in Demand



THE main street of Morrelade was filled with people hurrying home from offices and factories. It was dusk, and promised to be a dirty evening. Everyone was glad to think of the warm fireside that awaited him.

Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke, with Solomon, the bloodhound, on a lead, walked briskly towards their hotel. They had been out just to give Solomon exercise, and incidentally their walk had given them a rare appetite.

Suddenly, just opposite a small, badly-lighted bookshop, a man blundered out of the doorway, breaking into a run, and humped into Solomon. Snapping some remark at Tommy for allowing the great dog to be in the way, he hastened on.

"Bad-tempered brute!" grunted Hawke's assistant. "It would have served him right if Solomon had——"

"Thief! Thief! Stop, thief!" bawled a voice at their side, and in the entrance to the bookshop appeared a

bent old man, who was shaking his fist violently in the air as he yelled his strident alarm into the street.

"Ehi!" exclaimed Dixon Hawke, wheeling round.

He was just in time to see the man, who had knocked against Solomon, now racing away. It was possible to notice that he carried a book in his hand, nothing else.

"He's robbed me!" screamed the bookseller. "He's the fourth this week. Stop him!"

Some of the passers-by stopped; others took no notice. It took a lot to disturb a Morrelade crowd when they were hurrying home. One or two made ineffectual efforts to check the runner, who was making for a car pulled up beside the pavement farther on. There was someone already in the car, for a hand held the door wide.

Tommy grinned and slipped the lead from Solomon.

"After him, boy!"

Like a tawny streak, the great hound

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

flushed down the road. People scattered from its path, and in the background Hawke and the youngster ran their fastest.

Solomon made no mistake. He knew just who he was after, and within ten seconds he was close at the runner's heels. Then the man turned, something spat fire in his hand, and Solomon instinctively swerved to avoid a bullet.

That swerve lost him a couple of important yards. With a final bound, the man tumbled into the car, the door slammed, and the machine sped away.

Solomon chased it for about fifty yards, then pulled up to await his masters. Tommy carefully looked the big dog over.

"Didn't hit him. Gosh, fancy shooting like that in the open street. He might have killed anyone."

As a matter of fact, the shot had only smashed a plate-glass window, but that was merely a matter of luck. Any innocent passer-by might have been struck.

Unfortunately the car seemed to have got clean away without anyone having managed to take its number.

### The Five-Shilling Theft.

A CROWD collected. The shot had alarmed the district. Two policemen were soon on the spot, and nobody seemed to know quite what had happened. Dixon Hawke touched Tommy on the arm.

"They seem to have forgotten the bookseller's from where he ran. Let's go back and see what was stolen."

They found the old shopman on the pavement, still staring up the street.

"Did they get him? Where is he?"

"Got away in a car," said Hawke briefly. "My dog nearly had him, but he fired at it."

"Then he'll never be found again," snapped the bookseller. "I don't know what the police are for if they can't give a poor man like me proper pro-

tection. Another five shillings gone. I can't afford it."

Tommy blinked in some astonishment.

"Do you mean to say he only stole goods to the value of five shillings?"

"Only five shillings! I might have got six for that book if anyone had wanted it badly. I can't afford it, after the rest of my losses this week. I hope he drops down dead before he has a chance to read it."

"Read what?" demanded the Dover Street detective. "Was it a book he took?"

"Yes, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' The last copy I had in the shop after the thieving of this past week."

Hawke flashed a glance at his assistant. Like the boy, he was temporarily struck dumb. Did this old bookseller seriously mean to say that all the thief had taken was a copy of an old book, and that he had been ready to shoot and kill just for the sake of that! It seemed incredible.

"I may be able to help you get back your book," said Hawke. "I'm a detective. Let me come inside and talk it over. You've lost more than one book this week?"

"Yes, and all copies of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' I think everyone must be going mad. It's a book that's very seldom asked for these days, but three different people have bought copies since last Monday, and I've missed three other copies that people must have slipped into their pockets, as that man was doing when I saw him. What they all want with that book I can't imagine. Is there some competition on about it?"

This was really interesting. A run on "Uncle Tom's Cabin" wanted some explaining, for, as the bookseller said, there was no demand for it these days. It seemed positively crazy, yet Hawke knew from experience that things which looked crazy often were more serious.

"Can you describe the man who just ran out?"



# The Book In Demand

"A middle-aged, short, slight man with a pale face," said the shopkeeper promptly. "I didn't take special notice of him. He was rummaging in my fourpenny box when he snatched that book from the shelf and tried to slip it into his pocket. I shouted, and he ran for the door."

"And the others who bought copies of that same book? Do you remember what they were like?"

"No, I don't. But now I come to think of it, they were all men; that's all I remember."

Just then the police arrived, and the old man started telling his extraordinary tale all over again. The detective and his assistant left the shop. Solomon was looking about him as though itching for another chase, while Tommy was rubbing his chin in perplexity.

"Think that old chap is pulling our leg, gov'nor? What would anyone want with an old book like that? Stands to reason——"

"Stands to reason they had some object in wanting it," said Hawke. "It's one of the most promising mysteries I've ever come across. That the man was willing to shoot rather than be recaptured with the book proves the importance he credited it with. We won't be leaving Morelade to-morrow, after all, Tommy. We'll make a few investigations into this matter; but for the moment we'll let the police make their inquiries. It was a pity Solomon didn't get a bite at the thief."

A little later they were eating their supper in the quiet coffee-room at their hotel, Hawke making a few notes in his book as he ate, and Tommy glancing over the local evening paper as he waited for the slow waitress to bring them some biscuits.

Suddenly, he crumpled the paper and pushed it before his chief.

"Well, I'm blessed! Look at that!"

Dixon Hawke glanced at the advertisement indicated. It was only a few lines under the "Wanted" column.

"Wanted—Copies of old books, particularly the various editions of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Any condition. Apply P. J., 145 Ladfield Mansions, Morelade."

The detective pushed back his plate and rose from the chair.

"If that's a coincidence, it must be a very remarkable one. To make sure, we'll go straight along to Ladfield Mansions and see this Mr P. J. There must be something at the bottom of this sudden demand for such an out-of-date book. We'll take Solomon. He got closer to the thief this evening than either of us, and he'll know if P. J. is the same man."

## A Visit To "P.J."

LADFIELD MANSIONS proved to be a block of flats, only a few of which were occupied. The block was a gloomy building, standing in its own grounds, and Dixon Hawke had some trouble in getting the hall-keeper to answer his ring.

When at last he appeared, he informed them that the only P. J. in the house was a Mr Peter Jordan, who had a couple of rooms on the fourth floor. After waving a hand towards the self-acting lift, he retired to his fireside in the basement, evidently considering that he had been unfairly treated by being called out for such a trivial matter.

Hawke, Tommy and Solomon crowded into the little lift and ascended to the fourth floor. Guttering gas brackets illuminated the corridors, for nothing had ever been done to bring Ladfield Mansions up to date.

In this fitful light they made out the card labelled "Mr Peter Jordan" on one of the doors at the end of the corridor. There was a light underneath it, and they knocked quite confidently. In order to have a reasonable excuse for calling, Dixon Hawke had in his hand a battered copy of "Uncle Tom's

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Cabin" that he had unearthed in the hotel.

But no answer came to his knock, although they repeated it again and again. Not a sound came from the room.

Tommy stooped and peered through the keyhole.

"The table's covered with heaps of books, that's all I can see," he whispered. "What are we going to do?"

Hawke looked carefully about him. None of the other tenants of that floor seemed to be about. The rooms next to those of Jordan were vacant. Hawke produced a delicately-fashioned pick-lock, and then stooped to the lock of the door connecting the vacant flat with that of Jordan's.

The next second he straightened and turned the knob.

"It wasn't locked. We can slip in and have a look round without anyone knowing. We'll leave Solomon on guard in here. His growl will warn us if anyone is coming."

So they entered the room, where a gas fire had made the atmosphere oppressively warm. It was a small sitting-room and, as Tommy had said, it was choked with books. The table was piled high with them—books of all shapes and sizes. Already many people must have answered "P. J.'s" advertisement, and brought all the old volumes they could lay hands on.

Some had fallen to the floor; others were piled on chairs. There was scarcely room for one to move without stepping on one book or another.

### The Concealed Copy.

ON one side there were shelves, and, from these, many books seemed to have recently been removed, for there were wide gaps in the rows.

"Must be a crank," muttered Tommy. "Look! All these old copies of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' have their covers ripped open."

This was so. There were about a

dozen copies of the same book about, and in each case the cover had been split in two to reveal the linen and cardboard lining.

Hawke sniffed at the cigarette ends in an ashtray, and picked up a couple of stubs.

"Two different kinds of cigarettes, and each chewed differently. Two men have been here recently."

The room had very little else to tell them, and Hawke hesitated at breaking open desks. He had no right to be there, and there would be trouble for him if, after all, the business of the queer Mr Jordan proved to be quite innocent.

But he decided to have a peep into the inner room, which would probably be a bedroom. He opened the door, stepped inside, and came to an abrupt halt.

Tommy Burke heard him draw in his breath sharply. Gazing past the detective, the youngster saw what had occasioned the surprise, the body of a man lying face down on the floor beside the bed.

A dagger protruded from between his shoulders. There was no need to examine him to discover if he was dead or not. He must have died instantly after that savage blow.

"Huh!" Hawke carefully approached, his nostrils quivering like those of Solomon on the trail.

Here was something tangible, something far more serious than the stealing of a few books. The dead man had been struck down from behind while he stood in front of another bookcase which stood beside his bed.

Hawke gently turned him over, and saw a hard, middle-aged face wearing a sandy moustache. Clutched in the man's hand, tight against his chest, so that it had been hidden until Hawke moved the body, was a book.

The detective loosened the rigid fingers, and glanced at the title. It was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and the covers had not been torn apart.

Hawke slipped the book into his

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pocket. "Been dead about an hour. Run down and fetch up that hallman. He'll have to identify him for us," he said.

While Tommy was gone, the detective dusted powder on the steel handle of the dagger. He got no results. The murderer had taken the precaution of wearing gloves, or had held the dagger in his handkerchief. There were no finger-prints.

A few minutes later the hallman arrived, and at sight of the body he paled.

last hour. Now, can you tell me what visitors Mr Jordan has had this evening!" said Hawke.

"No, sir, I couldn't! My missus has been took bad, an' I've been down with 'er most o' the time. Dozens of people might 've come in, used the lift, an' called on 'im, for all I know."

Hawke sighed. There was not much hope there. As the hallman said, anyone might have entered Ladfield Mansions, used the lift, and ascended to the fourth floor. They could have



The great hound leapt the counter and landed on top of the old lady.

"Lummy! What's 'appened to 'im? It's Mr Jordan."

"You're sure about that?"

"Quite certain. Been 'ere a month, 'e 'as, an' a very quiet, respectable gent 'e was. You don't mean to say he's been——"

A low growl from Solomon, who had stolen in, made the man nearly jump out of his skin.

"Yes, murdered, and within the

left the same way they came in.

One thing was certain. This man Jordan was not the man who had run from the bookseller's. He was larger and heavier altogether.

Further questioning elicited the information that, to the best of the hallman's knowledge, the dead collector had no friends, and he never received letters—only callers with old books for sale. His advertisement had been in

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

about a week, and dozens of people had called on him during that time.

After the police had been sent for, Hawke made a closer examination of the room and the dead man's belongings. To his surprise he found no letters, no papers of any kind, and no laundry marks on the murdered man's clothes. It looked as though the deceased had deliberately removed all traces of his identity.

### Solomon On The Trail!

IT was midnight when the detective and Tommy left the Mansions. The police were in charge, and it was not until they were well on their way home that Hawke remembered he had omitted to tell the inspector anything about the book he had found in the dead man's hand.

Well, I'll tell him to-morrow. In any case, I'd like to have a look at it first. I've got a theory about these 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' books," said Hawke.

It being too late for a taxi, they had decided to walk back to their hotel, and they were making a short cut down a by-way when Solomon, as usual on the lead, gave a sudden jerk that tore the lead from Tommy's hand, and bounded into the shadows beneath some trees to their right.

"Solomon!" cried Tommy angrily, then checked himself when he saw someone running like the wind in front of the angry dog. "Gosh, he's got somebody there. It looks like the book-thief."

The dog vanished down an alley-way, and the detective and his assistant wasted no time in following. They raced round the corner, and heard a yelp from somewhere ahead. Tommy grunted with satisfaction.

"I believe Solomon's got him. Hold him, boy. Hold——"

He tripped and fell headlong. Hawke nearly tripped over him, recovered

with an effort, and stared at the huddled mass over which the boy had fallen.

"It's Solomon. He's out. The yelp we heard was from the dog, not the man. What have they done to the poor old fellow!"

By means of an electric torch they examined the tawny hound. There was blood on his head, and a growing bump, but he was only temporarily out of action. Already his limbs were twitching.

"He's been clubbed on the head," exclaimed Tommy as he stooped down. "And here's what did it, a weighted life-preserver. The man stopped at that corner and slugged Solomon as he came round the bend. He must have a quick eye."

"Yes, and furthermore he has an inquisitive eye, Tommy. He must have been following us from Ladfield Mansions when Solomon scented him. He's curious about our movements, or is it because he now knows a copy of that book was left behind that he'd missed!"

### The Mathias Gang.

WHATEVER the man's motive, it was useless to think of catching him. By this time he could be halfway across the town.

So they waited until Solomon staggered to his feet, shook himself, snorted and rubbed his head against Hawke's leg. He was apologising for the mess he had made of things, but they patted him and assured him he was not to blame.

Then they completed their journey back to the hotel, and the first thing Hawke did when they arrived in their room was to take out the book he had found in the dead man's hand, and examine it with a magnifying-glass.

Page after page he turned, but there were no marks of any kind to reveal it as anything out of the ordinary. Only

## The Book In Demand

at the back cover did Hawke linger in his examination.

"This inside backing page is not the original. Unless I am very much mistaken, an extra page the same size has been pasted over it. Give me a razor blade, Tommy."

Very carefully Hawke cut the edges, and his words were proved. The dummy page lifted off and revealed the original backing page beneath. This was covered with writing in a small, neat hand, and, after having perused it once, Dixon Hawke's eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

"Jove, no wonder there were men after this book, Tommy. Do you remember the Mathias gang who carried out the big jewel robberies last year?"

"You remember Mathias himself died about two months ago, and the police have never found the loot or the rest of the gang. Well, these are the notes Mathias wrote himself, telling in which banks, and under which names all the loot is hidden."

"Phew!" gasped Tommy. Then—

"It's clear enough. The men who have been buying copies of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' in this town are all members of the Mathias gang. In some way they've found out that their leader put it on record in the back of a copy of this book, where all the loot was kept."

"The gang has since broken up. Each man is working on his own to get the spoils. Peter Jordan must have been one of them, and his way of getting copies of the required book gave him too much publicity."

"Another of the gang, probably the man who stunned Solomon, visited him and killed him when he refused to let the other examine his copies."

"It's no longer a crazy book-snatcher we are after, Tommy, but some of the heads of the Mathias gang. And here is the secret of the missing loot. The police will now be able to recover it all."

"Unless this small chap with the life-

preserver gets it back first," said Tommy grimly.

"I'm going to get him," was the calm reply. "I've got a scheme by which Solomon can help us. The dog owes that man something, and I rather fancy he'll pay his debt before long."

### Hawke Sets A Trap.

**D**IXON HAWKE and Tommy Burke had disappeared so completely that not even the police could locate them. They had left their hotel with Solomon the next morning after the discovery at the Mansions, and had not been seen again.

But about the same time a dingy little shop in one of the suburbs of Moreslade was opened by an aged, cripple man and his grandson, as a second-hand book-store. Nobody would have recognised the bearded, rheumatically, old man as the eminent Dover Street detective, nor his pale, round-shouldered, dirty assistant as Tommy Burke. But anyone would have recognised Solomon, the bloodhound, so that was why Solomon spent his days in the secluded parlour at the back of the shop, and only went out after dark.

One of the chief features of their untidy window was a notice saying that they had many old books for sale at bargain prices, and a few piles of volumes lent colour to their announcement. Among these were one or two faded copies of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Days passed, and they carried on the work of the little shop in routine fashion, occasionally selling a second-hand school book to an inquirer, sometimes purchasing old volumes from needy vendors.

Business was slow, but they were patient. Nobody paid much attention to the place, and certainly nobody knew that every time a customer came in, Solomon was admitted to a space beneath the counter, where he was within a few inches of the visitor's legs.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

The bloodhound on these occasions kept as quiet as a mouse until the customer had gone. He knew what was expected of him.

Tommy Burke became impatient when on the fifth day what they expected had still failed to happen. He spoke with disgust of their wasted days, but the disguised Hawke only shook his head.

"We'll give it a week's trial, Tommy. If at the end of that time he hasn't turned up, I'll have to admit I've made a mistake. But I feel sure that he's still in Moreslade seeking that missing book. Of course, there's a chance that one of the rest of the gang will turn up first, but as the one we want is the most enterprising and the most daring, I'm reckoning on it being him."

### Solomon Again!

As he spoke, a shadow fell across their door. An old lady in a poke bonnet and widow's weeds came in rather nervously, and peered through her spectacles. The sight of Tommy seemed to reassure her.

"I want a book for my little grandson's birthday. He's twelve," she quavered. "I can't afford a new book. What can you suggest?"

Tommy glanced with disgust at his master, and followed the old lady round the shelves, making one suggestion after another. But she was hard to please. She turned down book after book, until just as he thought she was going to leave the shop empty-handed, she lighted on a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

"Well, I never! Here's just the book for Freddie. I loved it when I was a girl. He'll love it, too. How much is it, my dear?"

"One shilling," said Tommy gruffly, annoyed at seeing one of their decoy volumes passing into such innocent hands.

He took it to the counter to wrap it up, and she fumbled in her faded bag

for the shilling, but that coin was never set upon the counter. The instant she had stepped across the shop, there had come a deep growl from Solomon, a hookcase went over with a crash, and to Tommy's horror the great hound leapt the counter and landed on top of the poor old lady, bowling her over backwards.

"Solomon! How dare——"

Tommy stopped; Dixon Hawke rushed in from the room at the back. Both were able to see the effect of Solomon's onslaught. The bonnet had been knocked off, and with it had gone a wig. A close-cropped head was revealed, and, as the old cloak fell away from the "old woman's" shoulders, a belt with a revolver was uncovered.

The man on the ground snarled and struggled to get at his gun, but his hands were kept too busy fending off Solomon's attacks on his throat.

Dixon Hawke was able to dart in and relieve him of the gun; then Tommy with difficulty dragged away the angry hound, while the detective pulled the masquerader to his feet and fixed the handcuffs.

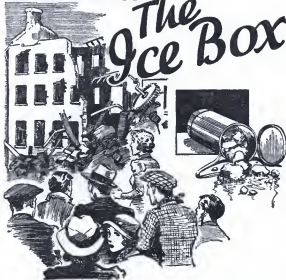
"A very neat disguise, my friend. If I'm not mistaken, you're the man who clubbed Solomon the other night, and the one who killed Jordan. Solomon never forgot your scent, even though we didn't pierce your disguise. Run out and get a taxi, Tommy. We'll take him to the police station."

And that was how not only the fortune in jewels stolen by the Mathias gang was recovered, but how James Bayne, the right-hand man of Mathias, was caught and sent to expiate his crimes. In his anger he gave away several others of the gang, and the dragnet of the law swept them in.

There was a handsome reward, and old Solomon got a fine juicy bone from Tommy for his share in the affair, and in their room at Dover Street there is a certain copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which is valued by Hawke as one of his most interesting souvenirs.

## THE CASE OF

# The Ice Box



THE police surgeon's astonishment had increased as the stripping of the body proceeded.

"The skin was glistening. Sopping wet," he later explained to Dixon Hawke. "Yet the outer clothes were perfectly dry."

The doctor and the detective were both agreed—after Hawke had paid a visit to the mortuary—that the immersion of the body, in the under garments, must have taken place after death.

"It's hard to imagine," agreed Tommy Burke, Hawke's young assistant, "that a man who'd got as wet as that would change into dry outer clothes and keep on the wet ones next to his skin."

The doctor declared that, in a long experience of post mortem work, he had come across nothing stranger than this.

"It's just as hard to imagine," he said, in reply to Tommy's comment, "why anyone should want to fish a drowned man out of the water, dress him in dry outer clothes, and hide him in a blitzed building."

"That is," he went on, "assuming that he was drowned. That's another bally mystery. I think death might have been caused by strangulation, or a blow on the head. Not by drowning. The lungs and stomach were not waterlogged, though they contained a certain amount of water."

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

The body had been identified as that of John Howland, an electrician.

He had been missing from his lodgings in Bridgeport for a fortnight, and he had been dead some days when found, hidden beneath an overturned cistern in a wrecked warehouse, and partly covered by rubbish.

It being on the cards that death was due to foul play, the military authorities were making a thorough investigation. Such killings might be the work of secret enemy agents. Hawke was called upon to furnish a report.

"I can think of a possible explanation," Hawke said to Superintendent Dawson of the Bridgeport police. "It's a little freakish, perhaps, but then, so is the whole mystery."

"That cistern was full of water before the building was wrecked," Hawke went on, "and it would be quite big enough to contain Howland's body. He's quite a small man."

"Yes," broke in the impulsive Tommy, "hut how——"

### Hawke Raises Doubts.

WHEN Hawke and Tommy next saw him, the superintendent was peeved. His old resentment of the intrusion of "outsiders" came to the surface.

"Got some more flocks of wild geese for us to chase!" he growled. "The Home Office must think we haven't enough to do."

He curtly informed them that everybody in the warehouse in question, a clothes distributing centre, had been interviewed by the police. And everybody, from the vanboy up to the general manager, led an open, blameless life. None of them had ever seen or heard of anybody answering to Howland's description.

"We should never have bothered with any notion of foul play," he said irately, "if you hadn't come along and put the idea into our heads. He was just a bloke who got knocked out in the

blitz. The body was first wetted by the hoses and then made partly dry by the flames."

"The flames came after the water, eh? I thought it was usually the other way about," chimed in Hawke.

"Anyhow, there's still the possibility——"

The superintendent groaned.

"——that the body was put there after the blitz. It seems that there were no casualties in this particular instance, and the fire chief recalls turning that cistern over. He swears that there was no sign of a body there then—immediately at the end of the raid. Yet it was found some hours later, just after dawn."

"There he goes again!" interrupted the superintendent; intimated that he had work to do, and left hurriedly.

So did Hawke.

The detective, who always took the superintendent's snubs with good humour, had business which took him out of Bridgeport for a day, and he left Tommy to follow up a few lines of inquiry.

"Here's a big question mark, standing up a yard," said the youth, "and that stupid superintendent is content to leave it unanswered. Why do there have to be so many people like him about! Usually big fat men with good jobs. We'll wake him up!"

"The mystery," said Hawke, "pivots about the dead man, remember. Keep returning to him. Interview one of his acquaintances, and after that line of inquiry has exhausted itself, find another of his acquaintances not associated in any way with the first. One half of a man's associates often have no suspicion of the existence or character of the other half."

### The Pretty Blonde.

AT Howland's lodgings, which Tommy visited the following morning, lived a working-class family, including two talkatively-inclined daughters.



## The Ice Box

He learned from them that Howland had been shifted about a good deal, so that he came and went, often without notice.

This suited his landlady's free-and-easy way of living, and so she had not been concerned about his fortnight's non-appearance.

One of the daughters had a characteristic tit-bit of gossip which had obviously been the subject of previous debate.

This was that Howland had been seen out with a lady friend altogether too "classy" and smart for him.

Howland, it appeared, had been a shabby, undersized, and rather pathetic little man, and the girl he had been seen with was a trim, pretty blonde, almost a head taller than he was.

One of the girls had been inquisitive enough to find out that she worked in a beauty salon, and that her Christian name was Sarah.

### The Empty Cafe

SO off went Tommy to the salon. "I'm looking for a Miss Sarah—er—um," said Tommy cunningly, on arrival.

The young lady to whom he spoke looked exactly like the girl described to him, but he was driven to suppose that all beauty salon attendants must look like that.

"I can't think of the other name," said Tommy, growing confused before such a blank, blue-eyed stare.

"There's a Miss Jane Moore and a Miss Gladys Cousins, and a Doris Smith. Doris," she called to a girl who was passing. "There hasn't been anyone working here named Sarah, has there?"

"Only yourself."

"Oh, but it couldn't be anybody for me, could it——"

She informed Tommy that her name was Sarah Burt, but that she had never dreamt he could have meant her.

"She was," Tommy later told his

chief, "the dumbest blonde that ever balanced one of those manhole-cover hats on top of her head."

"She said she didn't know Howland, and then she said she might have met him without knowing his name. She has apparently met so many. Very vain wench. You'd think everybody was after her. And she was obviously anxious to avoid publicity. I wouldn't have bothered about her any more, only . . ."

"Yes," queried Hawke, whose sensitive features wore a look of expectancy, "only . . .?"

"She came hurrying out as soon as I left the salon and called a taxi. I took it into my head to call another and follow."

"She went to the Sunflower Cafe, up on the Hightown Road. She was in there for a few minutes, and I paid off my taxi. I strolled in after she'd gone, and asked for a cup of coffee, but the bloke had got nothing. There wasn't so much as a stale sandwich in the place. It was absolutely bare, and the proprietor was sitting on a stool at a counter, reading a book."

"From the way he looked at me, I felt certain he knew I'd been following the girl. Seemed to look right through me!"

"I said it hardly seemed worth while keeping the place open with nothing to sell, and, after he'd gone on looking through me until I could feel myself going all crinkly inside, he said he was just hanging on until called up for the Army."

"After that I left, and—er—that's that. Now I suppose I'll have to start checking up on some of Howland's other friends . . ."

"A vain young blonde fighting shy of publicity, eh? That suggests that she might be in a position to help."

"What does?"

"The fact that she doesn't try to help. Vain young women of the type you describe do not usually wish to dodge publicity. When they do, it often means that they are involved in some

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

way which would spell trouble for them.

"This one said she might have met Howland without knowing his name. That statement came after she had had time to appreciate the transparency of her denial. The hurried taxi journey is suggestive. Her business at that cafe was obviously personal since she was there several minutes although they had nothing to sell, and very private and urgent since she took a taxi instead of telephoning. Businesses such as cafes on the main roads outside large towns are always accessible by phone.

"Another feature to keep in mind," went on Hawke, "is the possible motive. In the case of a man like Howland, rivalry in love would have to rank as motive number one. He was not a man of influence or wealth, and so was not murdered for those things. And we have no hint, so far, that he was mixed up in espionage.

"Why," he added, "should a smart, vain girl want to walk out with a shabby individual a head shorter than herself?"

"I suppose she would if she loved him," said Tommy slowly.

"In that case she would at least have known his name. No, I think it more likely that she was deliberately seeking to draw attention to herself. Why? In order to make someone jealous. Someone as vain as herself whom her publicly-displayed preference of Howland would strike as an insult."

### Who Is Penfold?

HAWKE rose from the armchair in the hotel lounge, where he had been sitting, and filled his pipe.

"And I was letting it all slip," gasped Tommy in mock despondency. "I did think that chap at the cafe—Bruce Penfold is the name over the door, by the way—looked a queer one, but, thinking him over after what you

say, he grows positively sinister. You must take a look at him."

Hawke and Tommy encountered Penfold accidentally, sooner than they expected.

Tommy was driving his employer past a "Cahman's Shelter" coffee stall near the bus stop in the centre of the town, when he slowed and drew in towards the kerb on the opposite side of the road.

"There's Penfold," said the youth, "just leaving the shelter to jump on that Hightown bus."

Hawke's interest became instantly focused, not on the man who had left the coffee stall to leap on the bus, but on the coffee stall proprietor, who also appeared keenly interested in the man to whom Tommy had drawn attention.

He had been eyeing Penfold while the latter drank his coffee, and he now leaned over the counter to watch him board the bus.

Hawke got out of the car and introduced himself to the coffee stall man.

"Well, I don't exactly know 'im," he said in response to Hawke's inquiry, "but one o' my customers, Jimmy Clarke, once spoke about 'im, and told me something queer about 'im. Funny, but I ain't seen Jimmy since. Warden, you know! Perhaps 'e copped it in that show the other night."

"Jimmy pointed 'im out," went on the man, "and told me 'e was sittin' in the bus opposite 'im when 'is gas mask tin come open. The bloke's gas mask tin, you understand, not Jimmy's. But there wasn't any gas mask in it—it was full of ice."

"Ice?"

"Yes, Jimmy's a bit nosy and officious, 'tween you an' me. You know, likes to throw 'is weight about—a big pot in the A.R.P. and all that. So Jimmy up and asks 'im what the idear is, and what d'you think! The bloke tells 'im he's been usin' the tin for a cocktail shaker."

"Keeps a cafe up on the 'Ightown Road, 'e does, and ain't got no stock. 'E ain't closed the place, but you can't

## The Ice Box

even get a cup'er tea there. Jimmy reckoned as 'e was up to somethin' queer. I 'spect the trouble wi' Jimmy 'e's been seein' too many o' these spy films. The bloke is a rum 'un, though, all the same. He'd as soon eat you as look at you . . ."

Hawke strolled up to the Sunflower Cafe some twenty minutes later, Tommy having driven him to a point just out of sight of it.

The detective had that queer sense of "feeling" the man's eyes on him as soon as he laid his hand on the cafe door handle.

Mr Bruce Penfold was a man in the early thirties, with a handsome but far from agreeable face.

Hawke stated his identity and informed Penfold that he was investigating the death of Howland.

"What I'm interested in at the moment," he said, after this preamble, "is tracing a tall blonde lady."

He repeated Sarah Burt's description as given him by Tommy, and said he had reason to believe she had called there the previous day.

Penfold's expression underwent no change. The scowl remained uniform.

"It's like the description of the fashion page of the 'Daily Picture,' ain't it?" he said in a voice that was a little too soft. "I know a few dozen dames," he added, "and they're all like you say."

He declared that he could not recall whether anyone who exactly answered the description given had been to the place and, with a shrug of his shoulders, resumed his reading.

### A Midnight Visit.

**H**AWKE left the cafe still with that feeling of a pair of extraordinarily subtle eyes surveying him even while they were supposedly busy reading.

He glanced about the derelict garden as he left the cafe. It was walled in and contained a quantity of timber, some

broken castings, a huilder's hand-cart, and some broken paving slabs.

"I've got to increase my popularity with the superintendent now," he told Tommy, on returning to the car. "I've got to persuade him to use his authority to find out from the telephone exchange whether Mr Penfold soon telephones that beauty salon to warn the blonde to keep her mouth shut."

Rejoining Tommy in the hotel lounge later in the evening, Hawke smiled a little ruefully.

"My stock's on the point of dropping out of the market. No call was made from the cafe after I left. It's either that Penfold is too wily, or that I am barking up the wrong tree. The superintendent has no doubt as to which it is."

"I suppose he hasn't even got a refrigerator working in that cafe," said Tommy presently, and added, "Funny! He hasn't an alcoholic licence. What could he want ice in a box for besides cooling cocktails? You don't go around taking lonesome tipples at drinks like cocktails, and he won't be allowed to sell it."

An exclamation from Hawke caused him to break off these ruminations.

"Why ever didn't I see the connection as soon as I spotted that junk in his garden," Hawke exclaimed. "Builder's barrow, cement sacks, and so forth."

Tommy was uncomfortably conscious of the responsibility Hawke was taking on himself in forcing the door of the cafe after dark that night.

The two slipped into the darkened premises, and Hawke began feeling his way about.

He was about to explore a cupboard in the room adjoining the shop when he stood suddenly still, listening intently.

A very faint movement near him had set him wondering whether Tommy had tiptoed in after him.

He was about to speak when he received a sharp, stinging blow in the neck, and was borne over by a heavy body.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

The stinging pain became a tickling sensation, and he felt warm blood spreading over the side of his face.

He tried to call out as he struggled, but his voice sounded hoarse and far away. He fancied he heard an answering call from Tommy, and then he must have lost consciousness for a few moments.

When he came to, he heard a scuffle and a crash of falling bodies and splintering furniture, and he staggered to his feet to assist Tommy against his attacker.

A moment later he had switched on his torch and then, unsteady as he was, he got in a well-timed punch on the jaw of the savagely-fighting man with whom Tommy was gamely struggling.

Penfold—for he it was—went down, and they secured his wrists behind him.

### The Secret Of The Ice.

**A** BODY which was later found in a cupboard in the cafe was identified as that of the coffee-stall keeper's inquisitive friend, Jimmy Clarke.

Penfold had evidently made up his mind that absolute ruthlessness was needed to ensure the success of his original crime, and he had sought to

dispose of Hawke as he had disposed of the other man who had found him out.

His first crime was the murder of Sarah's friend Howland, whom he had enticed to the cafe. This murder had created a big problem for him. It was almost as risky to remove the body from the premises by night as by day, since there were Home Guards in the vicinity who would certainly challenge anybody carrying anything bulky, or pushing a handcart.

So he had pushed ice inside the underclothing and down the dead man's throat to preserve the body, and eventually smuggled it out at the height of a blitz, when the attention of any watchers would be distracted.

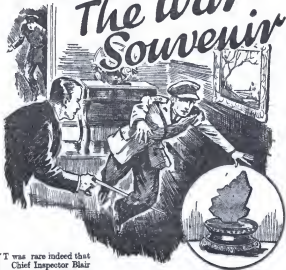
There was one watcher who had him under observation the whole evening, however. Jimmy Clarke, instead of notifying the police, had foolishly attempted to arrest the man himself, and it had cost him his life.

"If he'd aimed another quarter of an inch to the right with that butcher's knife," said Hawke later, as he lay recuperating in his armchair, "he'd have had three on his tally."

"And all on account of being jealous about the dumbest of dumb blondes," sighed Tommy. "Fancy swinging for that."



# THE CASE OF *The War Souvenir*



**I**T was rare indeed that Chief Inspector Blair called on Dixon Hawke of his own free will, and consequently Tommy Burke was quite startled when he opened the door to him.

"Fine day, Tommy," said Blair gruffly. "Is Hawke in?"

"Yes," said Tommy, "but I think he's very busy."

"Ask him to see me on an important matter, will you?" said Blair, and Tommy left him in the waiting-room while he entered Hawke's office, where the famous detective was carefully examining some plates under a microscope.

"I say, gov'nor, Blair's here and begging you to see him," said Tommy. "This is a red letter day!"

Hawke finished his little task, pushed

the instrument aside, and smiled at the youngster.

"Well, let's see what he has to worry about, old son. After all, we must put ourselves out to help him, now that he's swallowed his dignity enough to come and ask for assistance."

Blair entered quickly. A single glance was enough to tell Hawke that the inspector was worried, and in a puzzled frame of mind. Blair lit a cigarette and smoked it rather nervously.

"Hawke, I'm in a fix and I want you to help me out of it," he said. "I had a call early this morning from a high official at Whitehall—a Foreign Office man. There was a burglary at his Epsom House last night, and it's

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

absolutely essential to recover the stolen goods. I've done everything possible and I've got nowhere."

Hawke glance at his watch.

"You haven't had much time, yet," he said drily. "It's only half past two, and the robbery can't be much more than twelve hours' old. The Foreign Office doesn't move so fast itself that it can expect miracles from the Yard."

"It's no use my saying anything like that in this case," said Blair. "I must get quick results. The Assistant Commissioner has been at me ever since I started."

"All right," said Hawke crisply. "You want me to look about the place, I assume. Get hats and coats, Tommy! We'll talk about the case on the way, Blair. You've got your car here, I suppose!"

Blair had, and soon all three were speeding along the road to Epsom.

### The Important Papers.

**B**LAIR gave the outline of the case, as far as he knew it.

At six o'clock that morning he had been called from bed by an urgent message, and had immediately gone to the home of Sir Eustace Palfrey, a well-known permanent official at the Foreign Office.

Among the things stolen at the house were several expensive vases, a diamond brooch, and a portfolio, containing important documents.

"I rather expected the 'important documents' angle," said Hawke, when Blair brought out the statement as if it were a knock-out. "Palfrey wouldn't be so worked up and worried about a few trifling valuables. From what you've told me, the goods themselves can't be valued at more than a few hundred pounds. Was anything else missing at all?"

"No, nothing," said Blair, a little disgruntled. "It's pretty clear that the thieves were after the documents, and took the other stuff as a blind. I don't

know what the papers were about—everyone is as dumb as an oyster about them."

Hawke made no further comment, and soon they were drawing up outside a large Elizabethan house on the outskirts of Epsom. Smiling lawns faced the house, imposing chestnut trees spread their leaf-covered branches.

It was a lovely scene, and was suddenly enlivened by a rough-haired terrier scampering across the lawn, with a girl in pursuit. She looked no more than twenty and, in her flowered summer dress, and bareheaded, she was delightful.

"Scamp, Scamp, come here!" she called.

The dog barked, frolicked about, and then raced into a shrubbery. The girl followed him, while Hawke and the others went to the house. They were admitted by an oldish man, a servant, who stood deferentially to one side, saying:

"I will tell Sir Eustace you are here, gentlemen."

Sir Eustace Palfrey was a tall, white-haired, dignified man, clearly worried. He acknowledged Hawke absently, and said:

"Have you any news, Inspector?"

"I've brought Mr Dixon Hawke along, and I hope he can help us," said Blair. "If any man can, it's Hawke."

Tommy hid a grin at this unexpected tribute, while Palfrey went into further explanations.

### Miss Palfrey Helps.

**T**HE theft had first been discovered by a servant at half past five. The portfolio—he called it a despatch-case—containing the documents had been left in Palfrey's library.

The case should have been locked away in a safe, but Sir Eustace had been taken ill by one of the heart attacks to which he was subject, and the matter had been overlooked.

# The War Souvenir

"But I understand that the door was locked, and the windows fastened and shuttered," said Hawke. "It should have been safe enough here. Did everything go from this room?" He looked about the study, a large room on the first floor, well-furnished and lined with books.

"Yes—some old Sevres vases, very lovely pieces, and a brooch which my daughter left on my desk—and, of course, the documents!" exclaimed Palfrey. "The continued anxiety is making me ill, gentlemen."

"I'd like to see the servant who found the room unlocked, your daughter, and probably the rest of the staff," said Hawke. "But first—is anything else missing?"

"No, nothing—nothing at all!"

"Can you be absolutely sure?" demanded Hawke.

Palfrey said "Yes," but when Hawke asked the same question of Diana Palfrey, his lovely daughter, whom they had already seen with the dog, she frowned as she examined the mantelpiece, and then said slowly:

"I think there is something else, Daddy. Don't you remember the souvenir?"

Palfrey stared, and his face was a study.

"Bless my soul, of course! But it's absurd! Mr Hawke, a year ago I had to go abroad on an important mission, and on the way back, the plane in which I was travelling was damaged by enemy action. The pilot made an amazing return flight, and I took a very small piece of metal from the plane, and had it set on a gold mount, to remind me of my narrow escape, and the pilot's remarkable skill. But I'm afraid I was rather forgetful, and I hardly realised it was on the mantelpiece, often hidden by one of the vases."

"I don't see how that helps," interrupted Blair. "Unless it's further support of the theory that the other goods were stolen to cover the theft of the documents."

"That could easily be the case,"

admitted Hawke. "Now I would like to see the servants, Sir Eustace."

Hawke interviewed the servants one after the other. The footman who had opened the door, had also opened the study that morning and discovered the theft. The shutters at the window had been removed from the outside. There had been no trace of finger-prints, but several scratches on the window-sill showed that a man had come in that way. Probably a ladder had been used.

Finally, Hawke had a word alone with Palfrey.

## Hawke Wants The Truth.

THE old man was sitting at his desk, harassed and heavy-eyed. He showed little interest in Hawke's arrival.

"Well, sir, have you been successful?"

"Not yet," said Hawke, and then continued, "And I'm afraid I won't be, Sir Eustace, until you are absolutely frank with me."

"What do you mean?" snapped Palfrey.

"I mean that you are more worried than the loss itself explains. Also, I notice signs of tension in your daughter. I think you have some urgent, more personal worry, and it might well be that you suspect someone, perhaps a member of your household. Is that the case?"

Palfrey was taken aback.

"I—I am startled, Mr Hawke. I thought both Diana and I covered our concern very well. But I will be frank. Diana's fiance, who lives near here, stayed until very late last night. He was reading in one of the downstairs rooms. Oh, it's nonsense, but we are both tortured by the possibility that he took the documents."

Hawke said gravely, "If he is suspected, then the quicker the truth is known the better. Will he be here to-day?"

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"I'm expecting him, yes. He—he should have been here to lunch, but he didn't arrive. I was going to give him until five o'clock and then tell the police. That is one reason why I was so desperately anxious to get a quick solution. But—it's absurd! Bill would not have stolen the papers!"

"Will you telephone him and ask him to come?"

"I have done so, twice. He left his home before lunch, presumably to come here," said Palfrey. "I think—"

He stopped abruptly, for the door burst open, and Diana came in. The signs of anxiety which Hawke had noticed before were now very apparent.

"Daddy, come at once, please! Bill's here, and the police are accusing him of the theft!"

### The Incriminating Brooch.

PALFREY stood up slowly.

"Accusing him? It can't be. How did they—"

Low voices from the passage outside drowned his words. Tommy came in, followed by a young man in uniform, and with two pipes on his shoulders. He was tall and fair, a fitting companion for Diana, but his cheeks were flaming red, and his blue eyes glittered.

Blair brought up the rear.

"What the devil does this mean?" Bill was shouting (later Hawke learned that his surname was Fraser). "This fool policeman is talking a lot of bilge. I happened to find Di's brooch on the lawn, and was giving it to her—the policeman fellow was in earshot, and he started asking a lot of impertinent questions!"

Palfrey made a commendable effort to control himself, and explained the position. The colour drained from Fraser's face.

"I—I understand now."

"And I understand, Mr Fraser," said Blair with studied politeness, "that you have been away all day.

Will you explain your movements, please?"

"No, I'm hanged if I will!" Fraser spoke abruptly.

"I hope you will change your mind," replied Blair. "You had the opportunity for this theft, and you had some of the stolen goods in your possession. You're only delaying the case at all events—we can trace your movements."

"You'd be mighty clever!" snapped Fraser. "I went out on private business. That's all I'm saying."

"In that case, I shall have to ask you to come with me," said Blair.

"Well, I won't! I came just to explain to Di that I had to see some friends this evening, and I've got to catch an early train to town. You're not going to stop me!"

Fraser looked about the room, and then made a running leap for the door, handing Blair aside with the skill and vigour of a rugby footballer. Blair went staggering back. Tommy made a rush at Fraser, but Diana got in his way—perhaps accidentally, but more likely deliberately.

Outside, Fraser turned to the stairs and went down them three at a time. Tommy had by now succeeded in passing Diana and, with Hawke, raced after the lieutenant. In the big hall the servant, Harris, was standing.

"Stop that man!" cried Tommy.

Harris appeared to hesitate, and drew back. Then he changed his mind, snatched a walking stick from the hall-stand and thrust it towards Fraser. The stick went between the man's legs and he crashed down.

Before he could recover, Hawke and Tommy were upon him. Blair came thundering down the stairs, his hand-cuffs flashed and Fraser was helpless.

Blair smoothed his ruffled hair.

"That's got him all right," he said.

"I had an idea the girl was worried and kept near her, Hawke. Glad I didn't need your help, after all! I'll make this fine gentleman talk before he's much older."

He hustled Fraser off, but Hawke



## The War Souvenir

elected to stay behind. The girl and Palfrey were pale and despairing. Harris knocked at the study door shortly afterwards and said apologetically:

"I—I'm sorry, sir. Perhaps I should have let Mr Fraser go. I—I just didn't think, sir."

"That's all right," said Palfrey wearily. "You did your duty, Harris. It made no difference in the long run." Harris went out and Palfrey continued. "I'm afraid your visit has been a fruitless one. Mr Hawke, but thank you for your assistance."

It was Diana who spoke next.

"I don't believe it—I can't! Mr Hawke, you're famous for getting at the truth. Find out what made Bill run away like that, what kept him away from here to-day. I'd rather die than believe he would steal important Government papers."

"I'm afraid it's useless to say that, my dear," said Palfrey. "The evidence is overwhelming, and Bill's manner was surely an admission of guilt." He hurried his face in his hands and Hawke and Tommy went out, followed by an appealing look from the girl, who nevertheless preferred to stay with her father.

"What a rotten business!" exclaimed Tommy. "Fraser looks a good sort, too. But what a fool trick—handing her back her brooch when he must have known it would give him away."

Hawke said swiftly:

"He didn't, Tommy. He may have taken the documents, and has either a guilty conscience about that, or something else, which made him behave as he did. But he didn't take the brooch, or the vases. So we start from believing his story there. The brooch was found on the lawn, wasn't it?"

"Great fishes—so you believe him!"

"As far as that goes, yes. About the documents, I don't know. But someone else stole the brooch and, crossing the lawn, dropped it. Alternatively, the someone stole everything, and, wanting only the documents, as Blair suggests,

threw the other stuff away. But I don't subscribe to that theory, otherwise the police, who have searched the grounds, must surely have found the vases."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Tommy.

"Try to trace those vases and the missing souvenir," said Hawke. "The souvenir was a silly thing to take, but for one thing."

"What's that?" asked Tommy.

"You know as much about it as I do—work it out for yourself," said Hawke. "I'm going into Epsom to telephone. Stay near the house, somewhere in the grounds—Scamp will probably entertain you."

The terrier had approached, sniffed at them, and then yapped in friendly fashion, as if asking for someone to play with him.

### The Sevres China.

TOMMY waited, but although Hawke was gone for an hour, all he saw was Harris walking through the gardens, and another of the servants.

Hawke returned, this time in a hired car, and when he approached, he said:

"We're on to something, old son. I phoned Mischar"—he mentioned one of the best-known china experts in London, a man who often helped the police—"and he told me confidentially that he has been asked by someone unknown for specimens of Sevres china. He doesn't know anything else, but you see where that takes us!"

Tommy's eyes glistened.

"By Jupiter—the thief might have been after the vases!"

"I think so, yes," said Hawke. "The thief, whoever he is, probably has knowledge of someone who'll buy them at a good price. He took the brooch and the souvenir as well and the despatch-case, but dropped the brooch, or for some reason threw it away. The

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souvenir was stolen because it was mounted on gold. I thought that from the first, and it suggested a robbery for gain. That's why I wanted to make sure nothing else was taken—I wanted to get all possible evidence about the motive of the crime."

"And it wasn't the documents?"

"No, that's pretty certain. I wonder——"

He broke off, for from the shrubbery where he had first seen Scamp disappear, came a yapping and a growling, and then a high-pitched yelp, as if the dog was in pain. Hawke and Tommy hurried into the bushes in time to see the servant, Harris, picking something from the ground.

### A Happy Ending.

"THE despatch-case!" shouted Tommy.

It was—and Harris dropped it and tried to get away, but Hawke reached him and put him down with a nicely-timed punch. Hawke then picked up the case, while Tommy went to Scamp, who was licking a bruise in his ribs.

The case was marked by the terrier's paws and teeth, showing the dog had been playing with it.

Hawke stepped over Harris.

"Now, what's the truth!" he demanded. Harris did not try to make a fight, but admitted stealing the vases—he was an old lag, and knew someone in London who was prepared to pay high prices.

Harris had also stolen the souvenir and the brooch, as extras, but had dropped the brooch by accident. To make it seem as if the documents explained the theft, he had stolen the despatch-case. It was the exact opposite to Blair's theory.

"When I read about the importance of the case, I thought it might be worth something," Harris muttered. "I'd chucked it in the shrubbery, thinking

it would be safe enough there, but that blasted dawg wanted it!"

"That's just as well for Lieutenant Fraser," said Hawke. "When you knew he was being charged, why didn't you have the decency to let him get away, if nothing else?"

"I'd rather see him in jug than me," was Harris's only reply.

"You won't get that wish," said Hawke. He was going towards the house, while Tommy had Harris firmly held, when a car came up the drive. In it were Blair and Fraser. The officer was pale-faced, and Blair looked a little disconcerted.

"Mr Fraser's explained where he was," he said. "There was another young lady——"

"I knew her well, once, and she's been threatening to try to come between me and Diana," broke in Fraser tensely. "I wanted to see her and beg her to keep quiet. This morning I tried to find her, but only managed to make an appointment for to-night.

"Oh, I know I acted like a fool, but Diana mustn't know!"

Hawke said quietly:

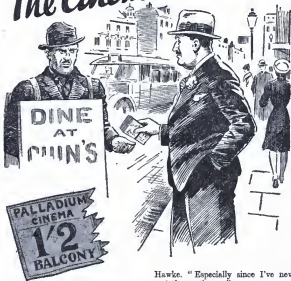
"If I were you, Mr Fraser, I'd make a clean breast of it. It's much the wiser thing, and I feel quite sure that Miss Palfrey will understand."

Fraser took Hawke's advice—and found he was right. What was more, through Harris the police were able to find the fence who was in the underworld market for Sevres china, and other precious pottery. The vases and the souvenir were discovered, and Harris and his principal were destined to serve long sentences.

"It's just as well Blair came to see you," chuckled Tommy. "The papers might have rotted away before they were found, otherwise!"

"More likely Harris would have found a market for them," said Hawke soberly. "But it ended well—and I'll wager that Sir Eustace Palfrey won't be so careless with Government documents again."

# THE CASE OF *The Cinema Tickets*



"**H**ERE'S a good thing, gov'nor." Tommy Burke pushed a letter across Hawke's desk. "Free seats at the Palladium Cinema, oh, boy!"

Hawke stretched out his hand and read the letter. It ran:

Dear Mr Hawke,—I have much pleasure in enclosing two complimentary tickets to any performance this week. If you have time afterwards, I should be delighted to renew our acquaintance.—Yours sincerely, Harry T. Dorman, Manager.

"Rather unusual," commented

Hawke. "Especially since I've never met the gentleman."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Tommy. "He must be mixing you up with someone else. But we'll use the tickets, won't we?"

"We'll certainly accept," agreed Hawke, "and we'll go to-night, about half-past five. I'm very curious, indeed."

But Tommy was puzzled by his peculiarly serious tone.

"Why so curious? It's only an advertising stunt, and a case of mixed identity, surely."

"Both are possible, but it's far more likely that Dorman has something to tell me, wishing to consult me without saying so directly. The suggestion of a

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chat, and the hint at an earlier acquaintanceship, speak volumes."

"But, hang it, why couldn't he have written or telephoned for an interview!" demanded Tommy.

"That's what we have to find out," said Hawke. "Meanwhile, there's a job for you. Make inquiries up and down the street for similar letters."

Tommy reached for his coat.

"London cinemas haven't had a very good time lately," he said, "and it's better to have a full house with a lot of complimentaries than an empty house altogether. I'll bet it's just advertisement!"

Hawke smiled, watched him go, and then turned his attention once more to the pile of correspondence on his desk. He was soon hard at work, but was interrupted by Tommy hurrying up the stairs and then bursting into the office.

"Here we are, guv'nor!" Tommy had his hat on the back of his head, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes. "The whole street's had them! I've discovered twenty-five!"

"How many were asked to go to see the manager?"

"None of them!" answered Tommy, a trifle disconcerted. "The letters are worded a bit differently from yours."

Hawke frowned thoughtfully.

"It's all very carefully done and cleverly worded," he reflected. "But I still think Mr Dorman chose this peculiar method of asking me to see him for a consultation."

### The Blackmailed Manager.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later, Hawke and Tommy entered the huge cinema house.

A fair crowd was in the foyer, and the house looked busy enough. Several other complimentary tickets were presented at the pay-box, near which was standing a tall, dark-haired, and portly man, well-dressed, and apparently genial.

"That'll be Dorman," whispered Tommy.

"I wouldn't be surprised," admitted Hawke.

It was not long before they were engrossed in the film. The whole audience was extremely attentive, and when at last the lights went up, Tommy blinked at his employer.

"That was a great film! Will we bother to stay for the news and the supporting programme, now?"

"We'll see it all," said Hawke, and they sat through an hour's extra programme, although nothing like so interestedly. Tommy yawned several times, and jumped up with alacrity when the end of the programme was reached. Hawke did not hurry to the exit, however, and they were practically the last to leave after that performance.

People were crowding through the foyer, and the box-office was busy.

Hawke spoke to a commissionaire, and was directed at once to the manager's office, which led from the foyer. A man's voice called, "Come in," and Hawke entered, saying to Tommy just before he did so:

"Stay here, old son, and keep your eyes open."

"Right-ho," said Tommy, and then with a grin added, "I'll make sure no one raids the box-office."

Hawke smiled and stepped inside. He saw a tall, dark-haired man sitting at a desk, and a platinum-blond girl sitting next to him. On the desk was a heap of silver, a bank paying-in book, and a pile of torn tickets.

The manager looked worried and spoke absently.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Well, well!" exclaimed Hawke. "Is this the way you treat old friends, Harry! Until I had that circular letter of yours, I'd no idea you were in London!"

Harry T. Dorman pushed his chair back, stood up and stretched out a hand. He was puzzled, but Hawke noticed he was careful to conceal that

# The Cinema Tickets

from the girl. He played up well as he said:

"Well, I'm blowed. You of all people!"

"I thought I'd use your tickets right away. Hawke's not the lad to throw up a chance of a free evening's entertainment," said Dixon Hawke, and thus made sure that Dorman realized who he was. Dorman's face brightened, and he turned to the girl.

"Give a hand at the box-office for ten minutes or so, Miss Reed, will you!"

He waited for the girl to go out, and stepped to the door, making sure that it was closed. Then he turned abruptly, and Hawke saw that his hands were unsteady.

## Dorman's Story.

"I hope you don't mind the way I wrote, Mr Hawke——"

"Of course not," said Hawke promptly. "I thought it a very clever method of approach, but it puzzled me. Why on earth couldn't you get in touch with me by normal means?"

Dorman drew a deep breath.

"I'll tell you as quickly as I can. I—I'm being blackmailed, heavily. I've paid every penny I can, and I can't go on. Now I'm told that if I don't find more money, my employer will be informed that I'm defrauding them."

Hawke frowned.

"Are you doing that?"

"Great guns, no! But I'll be frank, Mr Hawke. Ten years ago, under another name, I served a sentence of a year for embezzlement. I was desperate, my wife was ill—oh, I'm not going to make a lot of excuses. I committed a crime, paid for it, and then started life afresh. After a while I was lucky enough to get this job, under a new name, of course. If my employer knew of that year in prison, I'd go out like a shot."

"I can understand your difficulties," said Hawke.

"I've heard of you, and I knew you would help me if you could. If I went to the police they would find out about my past, and almost certainly tell my employer, but—the situation's grown worse even since I wrote to you. I am just checking the money—takings against counterfoils. The takings are forty pounds short. And I had a telephone message a quarter of an hour ago. If I don't take twenty-five pounds to the blackmailer within an hour, he will telephone my employers, and an immediate audit will be made of the night's takings. When it's discovered they're short——"

Dorman looked positively haggard. "What can I do! It's someone in the theatre, I know. Someone who can get at the ticket-box. Someone who knows my every move. That's why I wrote to you as I did."

Hawke said slowly:

"If it's someone here, surely you've an idea who it is?"

Dorman said, "It—it's one of three people. My secretary, Miss Reed, the assistant-manager, a man named Lunt, or the cashier, Clarke. They are the only three people with access to the takings and the counterfoil box."

"But surely by making certain you handle the money yourself from the box-office, you watch that it's not touched."

"The money isn't touched!" said Dorman excitedly. "But faked counterfoils are put in—the records show that forty pounds worth of tickets, in excess of the takings, are in that pile there. There is a box at the door of both sides of the house. Counterfoils are pushed in while the house is in darkness. Anyone could do it. And if there was a surprise audit, the takings would not tally with the half-tickets. It's a fiendishly clever plot, but if it's humanly possible, I want to make sure that nothing is disclosed. As a matter of fact, I'm desperate, Hawke—I can't sleep for worry. I feel I'm being followed

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

and watched all the time. But if I should attempt to have inquiries made, I've been warned by telephone that my real name, and past record, will be sent to my employer. You—you can see what a plight I am in."

Hawke nodded slowly.

"I certainly can—and scendishly clever barely describes it! Where have you to take this twenty-five pounds?"

"I've to hand it to one of three sandwich-board men, who will be in Coventry Street at nine o'clock. The first one is to have the envelope. But I haven't twenty-five pounds left! I owe money all over the place, even trades-people are pushing me for payment of old accounts."

"I see," said Hawke. "Tell me, have you ever once taken money from the box-office?"

"I swear I haven't! I've balanced correctly every night, but I can't to-night. It's impossible. These counter-foils——" he broke off. "The forgeries can be traced, but don't you see that if an inquiry starts, I'm finished!"

"Ye-es," said Hawke slowly. "All right, Dorman. I'll help you. I'm taking you on trust, but I'll lend you twenty-five pounds to take to the sandwich-man. I'll have to go to my flat for the money, but I'll see it's here in good time."

Dorman drew a deep breath.

"I—I don't know how to thank you!"

"We'll worry about that later," said Hawke. "Meanwhile, have you photographs of the three suspects?"

"Yes. There should be some in the files. I always ask for photographs when engaging staff."

Dorman went to the file and found the photographs.

Hawke recognised the secretary's platinum hair, and saw the good-looking features of Lunt, the assistant-manager, and Clarke, the chief cashier. With the photographs in his pocket he went outside.

"Nothing doing here!" said Tommy Burke.

"There's plenty doing, but I haven't fathomed it yet," said Hawke. "Anyhow, I've staked twenty-five pounds on Dorman's good character. Let's get outside."

In the street he took out the photographs. "Get those firmly in your mind, Tommy, and watch the theatre. If any one of the trio comes out, follow him or her."

"Okay," said Tommy, mystified but obedient.

### The Well-Dressed Tramp.

HAWKE went to his flat, took out twenty-five pounds in notes, and then returned to the cinema. Dorman was in the foyer. Hawke handed him the envelope, and Dorman could not thank him enough.

It wanted only a few minutes to nine, and the manager hurried for his appointment.

Tommy was missing. Hawke frowned, but followed Dorman nevertheless. He saw the manager hand over the envelope; that part of the story was true, then.

Hawke waited for ten minutes, and then the sandwich-board man, who looked like a tramp, went off on his own, leaving the other two at work.

Hawke shadowed the man cleverly.

The sandwich-board man disappeared into a doorway in Wardour Street, then Hawke waited. Shortly afterwards two or three well-dressed men came out, and then Hawke saw a fourth—a man also well-dressed, but Hawke saw, freshly shaven; there was a slight cut in his cheek, as if he had shaved too hastily.

The man hired a taxi.

Hawke followed him in another cab. His size and build were the same as the tramp's, and although he looked very different, Hawke was positive it was the same man.

The detective sat far back in the cab, and the driver drove well. After fifteen minutes, the first taxi drew up

# The Cinema Tickets

outside a block of flats in Kensington. Hawke's own cabby went past and then slowed down.

"What now, sir?"

"Wait for me, please," Hawke said, and he left the cab. He saw his man disappear into the flat, and then he hurried in after him and followed to the second floor, without being seen. The door was opened with a key and then a voice rang out:

"Let me go——"

It was Tommy Burke!

The door was slammed to, and Tommy's voice cut off. Hawke hesitated for some seconds, then walked to the end of the passage where he saw a fire-escape.

He opened a window, climbed out, and saw that the escape led along to the flat where his man had disappeared.

## A Surprise Entry.

HAWKE crept along the landing, reached the window, and heard a rough voice say:

"He sent it all right—he must have started lifting the till-money. We've got him where we want him!"

"That's okay," said a second voice. "But this young swab followed me—I wouldn't have noticed him, but I happened to see him outside Dorman's office. I've tried to make him talk."

"Tried!" snarled the first speaker. "I'll smash his face if he doesn't. Who sent you after us?" he added in a harsh voice, and Hawke heard Tommy say:

"Someone who'll put you where you belong!"

"Why, you——"

Hawke knew that he had to act swiftly, and he did not hesitate. He forced one elbow through the glass, and he heard the startled exclamations from the men inside.

He had an automatic, which he had brought from the flat, and as he went through he flourished it.

Tommy was lying on a couch, bound hand and foot.

The man with the cut face and Lunt, the assistant-manager, were there, and both stared at Hawke in stupefaction. Then the first man took a desperate chance and leapt at Hawke.

Hawke levelled his automatic at the onrushing crook, and pulled the trigger—or, at least, that was his intention—but nothing happened.

His automatic had jammed at the critical moment.

## The Plot Exposed!

HAWKE knew that with odds of two-to-one, it would be a desperate struggle, and one he had to win quickly, for the others would not be long in finding a weapon.

He crashed one fist into the man's face, and, as the fellow was forced back, ran at Lunt, who was pulling open a drawer in a desk.

Hawke saw the glint of an automatic, made a strenuous effort and, with the butt of his useless gun, struck at Lunt's forehead. Lunt staggered back.

Hawke's hand flashed to the drawer and, with the new weapon, he swung round.

"Keep back, both of you!" He was breathing heavily, but both men were cowering back, evidence enough that the gun was loaded. He took a pen-knife from his pocket, moved to Tommy, and managed to cut through the cords at the lad's wrists. Tommy was saying:

"I followed him, guv'nor, got up here—and then he tricked me. I was out for ten minutes."

"We'll trick him," snapped Hawke. "Now, you two—I'm working for Dorman. He's been victimised for long enough, and he is desperately afraid of the one lapse in his life costing him his job. I want to save him if I can, and

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"I can't do it if I send you to the police. Give me the whole story and I'll let you go."

Tommy gasped, while Lunt muttered:

"You're lying! You can't pin anything on us anyway—I've seen to that!"

Hawke said sharply, "You think so? I've pretty well worked out your whole vicious scheme. You plan to reduce Dorman to the stage where he takes money from his employers to pay you for your silence. Once he does that, and is more firmly than ever in your clutches, you intend to use him to stage a long-period fraud."

"As assistant-manager, Lunt, you would be in a position to get anything up to a hundred pounds a week, and with the help of faked tickets, and by cooking the records, you could probably work for several months. But before you could put your vile scheme into operation you had to have Dorman in your power. You could have got rid of him by telling his employer about his past, but you wanted a victim ready-made for the police when the fraud was discovered, as eventually it would have been."

### A Useful Confession.

LUNT'S lips were working furiously. "You clever devil! That's what—"

"Shut up!" snarled the other man, who had posed as the sandwich-board man. "Don't admit anything."

"If you don't, it's the police right away," said Hawke. "I want a signed confession of your blackmailing and your plans. Otherwise I'll risk Dorman's livelihood, and give you to the police along with my information. Your attack on my assistant will put you inside for three years at least."

"I—I'll confess!" gasped Lunt, and cursed at the other man when he tried to stop him.

There and then Hawke wrote out the confession, while Tommy covered the men with the automatic. Lunt signed and Hawke said immediately:

"That's fine, Lunt. It will help to send both of you down for a long stretch!"

"But—but you said you'd keep it dark!" Lunt squealed.

"You've nearly ruined a man's health and livelihood," said Hawke grimly. "You've tormented him for months. You'll pay for it. You'll be sacked. I don't intend to show this confession to the police, provided you clear out and stay out. I shall take the whole story to Dorman's principal, point out that, rather than steal, he had run himself into debt, spent all his savings, done everything he possibly could. I shall be much mistaken if he doesn't keep him on. And, so that I can see him before you get at him, I'm going now. Tommy, watch them—and shoot if there's the slightest need."

Tommy nodded grimly.

"I will, guv'nor."

He was almost sorry that there was no need. Hawke was back in an hour, or a little more, with a success to report; the owner of the cinema was fully prepared to overlook Dorman's assumption of a false name and his past mistake.

Then Hawke went to Dorman and told him what had happened. Dorman was profuse in his thanks, but Hawke declared that the manager deserved all that had been done for him.

On the way to the flat, Tommy said: "What a queer case, guv'nor. There was nothing usual in it—not a lot of suspects and someone springing a surprise on us."

"No," said Hawke. "We actually got in before the major crime, and I like to think we saved Dorman's life from complete ruin. Cases like this make my work worthwhile."



# THE CASE OF *The Check Cap*



**D**IXON HAWKE'S big car pulled up outside a medium-sized house on the outskirts of London.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and most of the residents in Acacia Road appeared to be digging for victory, but not entirely forgetting the flowers and lawns at the front of their houses.

As the car slowed down, Tommy Burke said:

"It looks as if everyone in Acacia Road is an expert gardener, guv'nor! Aren't there some grand gardens?"

Hawke smiled.

"I didn't suspect you of an enthusiasm for gardens, old son. But certainly there's a lot of pride taken in the gardens here, except the one where we are calling. What do you think of that for a mess!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Tommy. "You'd think they'd be ashamed to let it go like that. It's just a mess of tangled weeds."

That was the truth. As they opened

an iron gate and walked up a weed-covered gravel path to the front door of the house—Number 19—whither they had been summoned by telephone an hour before, they appeared to be in another world.

Gone was the tidiness of lawns, the rioting colours of spring flowers. Moreover, the house itself, although quite modern, was dilapidated.

"What did the fellow say?" Tommy demanded. "He'd lost three thousand pounds worth of pearls? It doesn't look as if he's got two pennies to rub together!"

"That's where you're wrong in judging by appearances," said Hawke, as he pressed the bell. "I had a word with the Yard. They've been trying to find Mickle's pearls for him, but they

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

admit they're no nearer than they were when they started three days ago. But Mickle's got some priceless furniture in the house, according to Inspector Blair, and other jewels in his safe worth all of ten thousand."

"I suppose he's not a crook," said Tommy hopefully.

Hawke chuckled. "Well, we can't be sure, but Blair seems to think everything belongs to him, and there's no suggestion that Mickle is a fence or anything like that. I—but we'll worry about that later. Someone's coming."

### The Missing Pearls.

THERE were light, hurried footsteps inside the house, and then the door was opened and a girl stood there. She was neatly dressed, and certainly pretty. She appeared to have been hurrying, and she had a pair of dirty gloves in her hands.

"You've been a—oh!" she broke off, and her eyes widened and she showed obvious disappointment. "Good—good afternoon. I was expecting a friend."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," said Hawke pleasantly. "My name is Hawke, and Mr Mickle sent for me."

"Oh, I see. Will you come in, please?" The girl stood aside, and Hawke and Tommy entered.

The hall was gloomy, and as untidy, at first glance, as the garden. So was the front room into which they were led. The girl hurried off to tell her uncle—as she called Mickle—and Hawke and Tommy looked about them.

"Priceless furniture!" muttered Tommy. "Why, the stuff in this place can't be worth a hundred!"

Hawke was bending over two chairs near the window.

"You're wrong, Tommy. Those two chairs are genuine Louis Quinze, a little battered and soiled, but any dealer would pay £40 or £50 each for them, and think he had a bargain. And that cabinet"—he stepped to one near the

door—"is genuine Sheraton, unless I'm badly mistaken. The man has a fortune gathered about him, and keeps it as if it were a pig-sty."

"He must be crazy!" said Tommy.

"We won't jump to conclusions," said Hawke. "I—"

He broke off abruptly, for the door opened. There had been no sound of anyone outside, and he did not hear the handle turn, but the door was suddenly wide open. Tommy jumped—and then stared, unable to help himself.

A tall, very thin and apparently very old, man entered. He was clad in a corduroy smoking-jacket fifty or sixty years behind the times, a pair of knickerbocker trousers, patched at the knees, thick black stockings, rubber-soled shoes, a muffler, and a smoking-cap, the latter a faded red. His face was lined, but his forehead was smooth and high, and there was a sharp intelligence in his clear grey eyes. He looked at Hawke.

"Mr Hawke, I am glad you are punctual—punctuality is a quality too rarely practised these days. Who is this young man?" He looked at Tommy, and Hawke introduced his assistant.

Horatio Mickle nodded in greeting, and then plunged into a clear recital of the robbery.

On the previous Thursday afternoon, while he had been out and the house deserted, his safe had been opened and three thousand pounds worth of pearls, part of a necklace which had become unthreaded, had been stolen.

His niece's return, with her fiance, had scared the thief, who had run off at once, going out of the back door as the others had entered by the front.

"I see," said Hawke. "And that presumably accounts for the fact that only certain of the pearls were missing."

"And I owe a considerable debt to my niece and her fiance," said Mickle. "I had hoped that the police would solve this problem quickly, and bring me my pearls, which have been in my family for many years. However, they

# The Check Cap

appear to be beaten. I hope you will have more success, Mr Hawke."

"If I don't it won't be for want of trying," Hawke assured him. "I would like to see the safe and the way the thief got out, please. I understand that there were no finger-prints left behind."

"That is so," said Mickle.

He led the way upstairs to a room, surprising, because it was the acme of tidiness compared with the rest of the house. It was furnished in old-fashioned style, lined with books, and with a heavy mahogany desk near the window. The safe was in the wall alongside the desk, and Hawke was quick to see that it was a modern one.

"There is a subsidiary staircase, leading to the kitchen," said Mickle. "The thief went down that, into a garden shed, and then along that path, which you can see from here, to an alley at the back of the garden."

"Was he actually seen?" asked Hawke.

"Yes, just a glimpse of him. My niece and her fiance heard a door close, and that aroused their suspicions. If, Mr Hawke, you imagine that she was involved in this theft, you are quite wrong. Her loyalty to me is utter and absolute, while her fiance is a man of irreproachable reputation."

Hawke smiled.

"I'm not going to start suspecting anyone yet," he assured Mickle. "But I would like a word with your niece and her fiance—what is his name, please?"

"Ramage, Guy Ramage," said Mickle. "He is expected this afternoon—in fact, I imagine Rosa, my niece, thought you were he."

"I know we disappointed her," said Hawke.

## The Onion Bed.

As they went downstairs, hurried footsteps came from the kitchen. Their arrival in the hall coincided with the opening of

the front door, and Rosa Mickle exclaimed:

"Darling, I thought you were never coming!"

In a moment Hawke was introduced to Guy Ramage. He was a tall, thick-set, pleasant-looking man, and after Hawke's questions—which elicited confirmation of the story that Mickle had already told Hawke—Ramage said with a grim smile:

"If I'd been three minutes quicker I would have taught that gentleman a lesson he wouldn't forget in a hurry!"

Looking at Ramage's powerful figure, Tommy thought that was not far short of the truth.

"Is there anything else you want?" asked Mickle.

"I'd like to look through the garden and the toolshed, where the man apparently hid for a few minutes," said Hawke, and Ramage and Rosa took him out. Tommy saw that the back garden, except for a small patch recently dug up, was in an unkempt condition as that at the front.

"I always feel that I should apologise for the state of the garden," said Rosa. "But our gardener left last year, and I don't have time. I have to look after the house. Uncle . . ." she shrugged and smiled. "Gardening isn't in his blood, I'm afraid!"

"You seem to be making an attempt," smiled Hawke.

"Yes, I'm just going to put some plants in," said Rosa. "A few onions—we seem to need them more than anything else these days. Guy suggested I make a start at least."

"Ye-es," said Hawke, absently. "Tell me, Mr Ramage, from where did you see the man running along the alley?"

"From the back door," said Ramage promptly. "He was a biggish fellow, with a black and white check cap. I didn't see his face, unfortunately, but if I ever saw his back again I'd recognise him all right. There's something unmistakable about the back of a head, isn't there?"

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"I agree with you," said Hawke, and then went back to the house. He had a few words with Mickle, and then drove away with Tommy. In the next street Tommy said slowly:

"There isn't much to go on there, gov'nor. This is going to be one of those cases where we draw a blank, I think."

"It may be," admitted Hawke slowly. "On the other hand, it may not. I've one theory, old son."

"What is it?" demanded Tommy. "The uncle!"

"Not necessarily, and my theory hasn't reached a stage where I can try to name anyone yet. But I don't believe that the thief would have gone away with only those pearls, scared off though he was, unless that was all he wanted to take."

Tommy drew a sharp breath.

"You mean he just went there for them? But why on earth should he?"

"I don't know yet," said Hawke. "I want to get the history of those pearls, and at this stage I don't want to ask Mickle about it. Meanwhile, I want you to go back to 19 Acacia Road, and keep an eye on the people. Just report callers, and the times any of the others leave the house and return."

Tommy was puzzled, but Hawke vouchsafed no further information.

Hawke drove immediately to Scotland Yard, where Chief Inspector Blair was only too glad to give information. He had already learned the full story of the pearls.

"They were left to Mickle by his father," said Blair. "So were most of the other jewels. Mickle is something of a miser, as you've doubtless seen!"

"I have," agreed Hawke. "Well, Blair, what ideas have you got about the case?"

Blair hesitated and then said slowly: "To tell you the truth, Hawke, I suspect the girl. I've nothing in the way of proof, but Ramage says the old man makes her do all the housework, won't keep a servant, allows her a few paltry shillings for pin-money, and

generally gives her a rotten deal. She apparently feels she has a right to the pearls—her own father was left some money, but none of the family jewels."

Hawke nodded thoughtfully, and left soon afterwards. He spent ten minutes on a phone call from a nearby kiosk, and then returned to his flat.

### Tommy's Rugger Tackle.

MEANWHILE Tommy Burke had found a place where he could watch the alley as well as the front of Number 19; but he was feeling pretty bored. No one went in or came out until dusk was approaching. Then he saw a big, square-shouldered man turn into the alley—and the man wore a cloth cap, of black-and-white check!

Tommy followed at once.

He saw the man reach the back of Number 19, and then he heard a shout from the house. A moment later Ramage appeared at the back door, shouting—

"That's him—that's him! Stop thief!"

Tommy creased along the alley, while the man in the check cap turned quickly. Ramage was making a good pace, but the man would have escaped but for Tommy, who was lighter, but made up for that by the surprise of his attack.

He sent the man hurtling against a wooden fence, and, when the fellow recovered his balance and was about to launch himself at the youngster, Ramage vaulted from the garden.

Caught between two fires, the be-capped man stopped, fists clenched and an ugly expression on his face.

"Now then, if you don't look aht, I'll smash yer bloomin' faces in!"

He looked capable of carrying out his threat. Ramage hesitated, but Tommy flung himself forward, grabbing at the man's ankles. He took a kick on the shoulder, but succeeded in his purpose.

The man lost his balance, and when

## The Check Cap

the melee was over, Tommy was sitting on his chest, and Ramage was tying his ankles firmly.

"He must have thought there was a chance of getting something else," said Ramage. "What do you propose to do?"

"Send for the police and then report to my chief," said Tommy promptly.

They did not have to wait long for the police, for a beat-patrol man soon arrived.

Confident that the tough customer was safely looked after, Tommy hurried to a telephone and reported to Hawke.

"So the man came back, did he?" said Hawke. "And Ramage recognised him on the instant?"

"Yes—the fellow must be an absolute fool! Unless——" Tommy broke off, but went on excitedly—"unless he had an appointment with someone at the back of the house!"

"That's just possible," admitted Hawke. "I'll come at once. But I'll call in at the local police station on the way, probably."

He did so, and met Blair, of the Yard, there. The prisoner would not talk and Hawke and Blair repaired to No. 19. There Tommy was waiting with Ramage, Mickle and Rosa. There had been an atmosphere of suppressed excitement at the house all the time.

### The Spring "Onions".

**B**LAIR looked grimly about him. "It's quite obvious to me," he said, "that the man had an appointment with someone here. I'm sorry, Mr Mickle, but that is the obvious reason for his return. Who made the appointment?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mickle.

"I was a little uneasy about that second visit," admitted Ramage reluctantly.

"It's a preposterous suggestion!" snapped Mickle. "I suppose in a few moments it will be suggested that I arranged the theft myself, for in-

surance! Bah! You've got the man who stole them—make him talk!"

"How do you know he hasn't talked?" asked Blair, and when the others started he went on sharply, "Mr Mickle, has it ever been suggested that the pearls should have been Miss Mickle's? That they rightly belonged to her?"

Mickle stared in open-mouthed astonishment.

Rosa Mickle was looking from one man to another. Her denials were loud, yet they sounded unconvincing. Mickle was clearly dumbfounded, but Ramage appeared not wholly surprised. Nevertheless he said stiffly:

"You can't make statements of this kind without very good grounds, Inspector. And my fiancée must have legal advice immediately."

"Just a moment," interposed Hawke. "Supposing the jewels are found. That will be a definite contribution to the problem."

"That's the very thing I employed you for!" snapped Mickle.

"And I think I know where to find them," said Hawke. "Inspector, in the garden is a small patch of newly-dug ground which, according to Miss Mickle, is being used for growing onions. It's nearly dark, but I suggest you have your man go through the patch, using small forks, and torches for light. If the pearls aren't there——" He broke off and shrugged.

Then Rosa Mickle flung herself at him, beating at his chest.

"It's a lie, it's a lie! There's nothing there, nothing!"

Hawke kept her at bay until a policeman gripped her wrists. Tommy felt a little sick at heart when the police went out.

### Hawke's Ruse.

**I**N the room were Hawke, Mickle, Ramage, the girl, and one constable, as well as Tommy. Little was said, but after no more than

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

twenty minutes Blair came hurrying in. In his hand was a small tin box, containing a bundle of cotton wool—and inside the bundle a dozen small pearls.

"It's incredible!" exclaimed Mickle.

"Incredible or not, I'm going to charge your niece here and now!" snapped Blair. He turned to the girl, but Hawke interrupted.

"I shouldn't be too hasty, Blair. Miss Mickle prepared the ground, yes, but that doesn't mean she planted pearls instead of onion seedlings! Mr Ramage suggested that she should start gardening—and Ramage is guilty of making at least one deliberately false statement. I think he will bear questioning."

Ramage's eyes widened and his mouth drew tight.

"Don't talk like a fool! I saw the man——"

Hawke snapped: "What makes you think I was going to accuse you of a false statement about the man in the check cap?"

Ramage drew back a pace and muttered:

"I—I haven't said anything else! I know nothing about it. I tell you, nothing! The man was here. I saw him! When he came back to-day, I recognised him in a moment! I was afraid then that it was Rosa, but——"

"You're lying uselessly," said Hawke coldly. "And I can think of no more contemptible thing than a man who deliberately plans a robbery, intending that the woman he professes to love should be the victim if anyone is caught. You told the inspector that Rosa Mickle thought the jewels were rightfully hers! You lied about the man running away—you saw no such man! You pretended to hear a noise, and pretended to see the man, but actually you had been here already, stolen the pearls, and put them for safety in the newly-dug patch of earth."

"It's—it's not true," muttered Ramage, but he was looking desperately

about him, as if seeking a means of escape. There was none and he screeched, "Ask the man you've caught, make him talk!"

"That will be quite useless," said Dixon Hawke calmly. "I doubted the story of your seeing the thief, and I arranged for a man to come here this evening, wearing such a cap as you described! You said it was always possible to recognise a man by his back, but the fact that you professed to recognise a man who has never been near the house proved that you lied!"

Ramage's lips turned back. "You—you devil!" he cried as Blair stepped forward. "Let me get at him, let me——"

But the police closed in on him and he was led away.

Later, while Tommy was marvelling at Hawke's ruse—and Blair was chuckling over his own mistaken idea, for he was in good spirits—Hawke was speaking to Mickle and his niece.

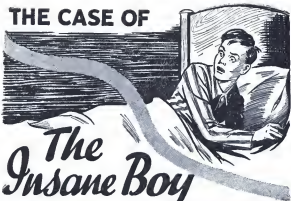
"I'm sorry it had to happen, Miss Mickle, but you can see how cleverly the rogue played on you. He took the pearls, and I have no doubt he would have taken more later on. He wanted to make sure that he would incriminate you if anything went wrong, that's why he worked carefully. I made inquiries and learned that none of the usual channels for the disposing of stolen goods knew of the pearls, so I assumed they were still here. The one newly-dug patch of garden seemed to me a perfect hiding-place. You might well have been successfully framed, but Ramage suggested too many things, making the mistake of over-confidence."

"I'm glad I found out in time," said Rosa slowly.

"So am I," said Hawke. "And for you, sir"—he addressed Mickle—"I have a suggestion. Treat your niece more generously—had you done so before, Ramage would never have had the excuse of suggesting that she felt she had a right to the jewels."

## THE CASE OF

# The Insane Boy



**F**EET clattered up the two flights of stairs leading to the Dover Street chambers of the famous detective, Mr Dixon Hawke. Somebody was in a tremendous hurry, stumbling as he came charging up.

Dixon Hawke, sitting at the lunch table with his assistant, Tommy Burke, put down his serviette. He frowned as he pushed back his chair. His keen senses had told him that more than mere haste made the visitor stumble on those well-lighted stairs.

Crossing to the small entrance foyer, the detective jerked open the door as somebody tapped hurriedly. A lad of some fourteen years of age darted past him into the room. He was panting for breath, as if he had been running a very long way.

"Don't let them know I'm here—please!" he panted.

Hawke closed the door and swung round to face the youngster. He obviously came from a rich family, for his clothes were neat and well-tailored. He was a likeable lad, with an honest face and frank eyes. His cheeks were pale,

and he trembled slightly as he stood there looking up at the detective.

"You are Mr Hawke!"

"Yes—but what was the idea of racing up like this and making me think a herd of elephants was on the stairs? Who's after you?"

"My—my guardian!"

"And why have you run away from him?"

"Because he brought me up to town to have me examined by some doctors! He thinks I'm crazy, and I know that the doctors think so, too! They'll put me in an asylum amongst a lot of mad people! You've got to help me, Mr Hawke. I'm not crazy! I'm not!"

"Steady, young 'un!"

The detective took the lad by the arm and led him to a chair. It was placed directly in front of a window, and, in the strong light, Hawke was able to take good note of the visitor's eyes. Although they were dilated, they were not those of a lunatic.

"Why does your guardian think you're crazy?"

"Because of what I saw—something

# Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No: 7

awful! A heavy, black thing which sat on my chest and looked at me—a black band I saw crawling through the air from my bedroom window to the ground!"

Hawke shot a quick look at his assistant. Tommy had nodded towards the telephone and significantly tapped his head. He was sure that the youngster was out of his mind.

"Now, then, youngster!" Hawke said kindly. "Start at the beginning. In the first place, who are you?"

"I'm Peter Conyers. I live at Eekedown, in Surrey."

"Oh-ho! You are related to the famous scientist, Dr John Conyers, the man who spent his life searching for antidotes for snake bites. He saved thousands of lives in India, I understand!"

"That's right, Mr Hawke. That was my dad. He's dead now. He died three months ago, and I'm all alone—except for my guardian."

"Who is he?"

"A lawyer. Dad's lawyer. Mr Dawson."

"Of Dawson, Petrie & Dawson," Hawke nodded. "A very fine old firm. So Mr Dawson is trying to have you examined for insanity, eh?"

"Yes, sir. You see, about three weeks ago I was taken ill and had to leave school for a bit. Mr Dawson opened dad's house at Eekedown for me, and stayed there to keep me company. Then, just four nights after we'd arrived——"

## An Incredible Story.

THE lad broke off, shuddering. Hawke saw him glance over his shoulder with wide, scared eyes. It was a moment before he was able to control himself.

"I woke up," he went on in a whisper, "and the room was awfully dark. I didn't know where I was for the moment. I was cold, sir, cold and so scared that I couldn't move. Then

I felt a weight on my chest. There was a black sort of heap on the white sheet, and something like a black flower which rose out of it and looked at me!"

"Looked at you!"

"With green, beady eyes, sir!"

A low whistle came from Tommy Burke, and he began to fumble with the telephone. Hawke gave him a warning look.

"What happened, Peter?" he asked gently.

"I stayed like that for ages, sir, and then something seemed to snap inside me. I must have fainted. When I came round it was morning, and the housekeeper and Mr Dawson were fussing round me. The housekeeper had found me in what she said was a fit!"

"And the black thing had gone?"

"There was nothing in the room. When I told Mr Dawson, he sent for a doctor. They wouldn't believe me. They told me it was a dream. I decided it was myself in the end."

"And after that you saw the thing again?"

"Two days ago, sir. I wouldn't stay in that room, so I was moved up to dad's old room in what we call the tower. It's not a tower really, but it's at the top of the house in a wing of its own. I slept all right for a week, and then——then——"

The youngster began to tremble, but a sympathetic touch from Hawke's hand steadied him.

"It happened as before, sir. I woke up cold and scared. This time there was moonlight and I sat up in bed. Then I looked at the window. It was open at the bottom and over the sill was creeping a long black band!"

"A hand!"

"Just like that, Mr Hawke. It was about six inches broad, and it stretched from outside to the floor. I screamed and threw my pillow. It shot back like a spring and vanished out of the window. I was too scared to move for a moment, but then I heard a noise like a violin being played, like music scales,



# The Insane Boy

It came from outside. I got out of bed and went to the window, and there—in mid-air—not far from the ground—was the black band sliding to the ground!"

"You'd better make that clearer," Hawke said.

"It's—it's all I can say, sir. There was such a funny light from the moon that I couldn't see properly. The black band was twisted like the thread of a screw. It was sliding down, and all the time the music played. I—I couldn't stand it. I ran out of the room screaming. Mr Dawson came. They had to send for the doctor. I believe I was out of my mind after seeing that band. But I'm not now. I'm sane. I did see that thing—twice!—but the doctors won't believe me."

The youngster's voice died away in a whimper. The detective paced up and down the room. He was bewildered by what he had heard. It was certainly a lunatic's story, and yet Hawke was sure Peter Conyers was sane.

"So, after being examined by doctors, you ran away from your guardian and came to me!" he said.

"Yes, sir. I've heard so much about you and how you help people. I know you'll save me from being put amongst crazy people."

## The Angry Lawyer.

THE youngster suddenly gave a cry, and, running to the detective, caught hold of his arm. An angry voice had come from the floor below. Somebody was arguing with Mrs Watson, the house-keeper of Hawke's chambers.

Then feet pounded on the stairs as the speaker ran up. There was a heavy blow on the door.

"Don't let him in!" Peter Conyers begged. "It's Mr Dawson!"

As he spoke there was another thunderous blow. Hawke shrugged his shoulders. It was impossible to keep the lawyer out. He had every legal right to take away the youngster who

was his ward. Hawke made a sign to Tommy, who opened the door.

A square-jawed old man, with a rat-trap mouth and fierce eyes, walked into the room. He was gripping a rolled umbrella, and thrust it forward menacingly like a rifle.

"Ah, I thought I'd find you here, Peter!" he snapped. "Come along, now. We're going back to Eckadown."

He glared at Dixon Hawke.

"And whatever story you've been told, you'll forget, d'you understand!"

The detective met the glare with a smile.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but I cannot forget that story. Peter has asked me to help him. I intend to do so."

"Ridiculous! The doctors——"

"I have not a very good opinion of medical experts, Mr Dawson. Peter is as sane as you or I!"

The lawyer gasped. Then he fumbled with a pair of pince-nez and coughed nervously.

"I've heard about you, Mr Dixon Hawke," he said, and as he spoke he recovered his old arrogance. "You're an interfering pest, and have used your cunning to bamboozle the public into believing you a great criminologist! Bah! You're not so clever as you pretend to be!"

Hawke smiled. Only a few months before, the firm of Dawson, Petrie & Dawson had been defending a case in which the detective was interested. It had been Hawke's skill which had caused the defendant to be found guilty. There was reason, therefore, for Mr Dawson's anger.

Noting the smile, the lawyer shook his umbrella, and his quick temper flared up.

"You're at liberty to come down to Eckadown, sir!" he boomed. "It would be a good thing to show you up. My car is at the door and you can drive down."

"I'd be delighted to come, Mr Dawson!" Hawke said. "After all,

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

although Peter is young, he has a right to request my services."

The lawyer was startled. He had not expected that his offer would be accepted. Once again he fumbled nervously with his pince-nez, and then he gave a little bow. Advancing grimly, he took a firm hold on Peter's arm.

"Come along now, Peter!" he said gruffly. "Mr Hawke will be with us, so perhaps you won't run away again!"

During the long drive down to Ecksdown the lawyer sat silently by the side of his ward, occasionally glaring over him at Dixon Hawke. The detective's assistant sat in front by the side of the chauffeur.

### The Clause In The Will.

ECKSDOWN was a small village not very far from Kingston-on-Thames. It was popular with fishermen, and the local inn was always patronised by devotees of line and rod.

The house which had been owned by Dr Conyers was on the outskirts of the village. It was a fine old building dating back to Georgian days. It was of three storeys, and at one end there was a projection like a squat tower.

Hawke guessed that this was the tower room where Peter Conyers had met with the strange experience which was likely to cause him to be pronounced insane.

The youngster having been placed in the care of the housekeeper, a motherly old soul, the lawyer led his visitors into the library. He was less aggressive now.

"Mr Hawke," he said, "if there was any hope for this poor lad I would be the last to stand in your way. He is, however, undoubtedly mad. I will tell you—in strict confidence—that there is insanity in the family. To-morrow he is to be examined by two great specialists. You will appreciate the fact that I must know—for there is a considerable fortune in my care for him."

"If he is pronounced insane, what then?"

"The money will go elsewhere, sir."

"May I ask where?"

"In his will Dr Conyers put a clause that if his heir died, or if he was unable to use the money, it should be used to promote the work on which he had spent his life—namely, experimenting with antidotes for snake-bite. That great work is being carried on, sir, by the deceased's colleague."

"Who is that?"

"A Dr Walker. He is now the head of the Conyer Research Laboratories."

The lawyer paced slowly up and down the room.

"Will you please leave me to carry out my unfortunate duties!" he asked at length. "Can I make you understand how repulsive this publicity is to me?"

"There will be no publicity, Mr Dawson. I still, however, persist that the lad is sane."

"Then you must be mad yourself, sir. Bah! I thought I could reason with you. Go and examine the room and then get out of this house. I have tolerated your interference far too long!"

Hawke shrugged his shoulders. Then, with a slight bow, he left the room after the servant for whom the lawyer had rung.

He was led through the rambling old building to the tower-room. It was nicely furnished and altogether charming.

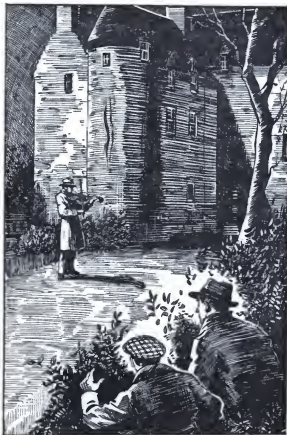
Hawke's examination was quick but thorough. Finally he stopped at the window, and for a long time stared down into the shrubbery below. With magnifying-glass he went over every inch of the sill.

"See anything, Tommy?" he asked at length.

Tommy took the lens. There were puzzling scratches near the centre of the sill. They were very fresh and looked as if they had been made by sharp claws.

"What can this be, chief!"

## The Insane Boy



Hawke and Tommy saw the long black ribbon climb higher up to the tower at the command of the violinist's weird music.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"I don't know—but I think something came in the window, as Peter said. We might as well go now. There is nothing to be done here."

### The Man Who Drinks Milk.

AS the Dover Street pair came down the stairs they saw a tall man with a Van Dyke beard being shown into the study by Mr Dawson.

"I am very glad you've come, Dr Walker," the lawyer said. "It is splendid of you to be so concerned about Peter."

The door closed and a faint murmur of voices came from the room. After a moment's hesitation Hawke left the house. He was silent until they came out into the road. Then he took his assistant by the arm.

"Tommy, I'll stake my reputation that Peter did see the black band, and that those claw marks have something to do with it!"

"I don't think those specialists who are going to examine the youngster to-morrow will agree with you, chief!"

"I'm afraid not."

Tommy gave him a queer look.

"Dawson is a strange sort of fellow," he said. "I wonder if he has more interest in Dr Conyer's estate than his professional duty!"

"He belongs to a very fine old firm. All the same, I think we'll stay in Ecksdown to-night. I have a feeling that something will happen before those doctors come down."

Not another word about that subject would the criminologist say. He walked through the village to the Trout Inn, where rooms were engaged. Hawke had stayed there on previous occasions, for he was a keen fisherman, and had hooked many trout out of that part of the river.

As they were making their way downstairs to the lounge they met one of the waiters coming up carrying a tray. On

it was a bottle of milk and a glass. The man smiled as he saw the detective.

"Good-day, Mr 'Awke! Ain't seen you for a long time, sir!"

"I've been too busy to fish, Harris. How's business?"

"So-so, sir. The old crowd don't come down so much now. We get gentls like this one who drinks milk." Harris pointed indignantly to the bottle. "A bottle a day 'e puts inside him!" he said.

"A regular client?"

"Comes down on and off, sir. A Dr Walker."

He leaned forward confidentially.

"A crazy bloke, sir. 'E drinks milk out of a saucer!"

The man went on up the stairs, and Hawke and his assistant descended to the lounge. The detective dropped into a chair, and for several hours he sat there, hunched up, smoking pipe after pipe.

At dinner Hawke was strangely grim. Tommy noticed him glancing across at the table where Dr Walker sat. There was a bottle of wine on the man's table, and he was very cheerful. It was curious that a man who drank milk should also like wine.

The guests of the Trout Inn retired early to bed, and by eleven o'clock that night the place was silent. Tommy, who had gone to his room to sleep, was surprised when his door was opened, and Dixon Hawke came in.

"Don't undress!" he said sharply.

"We're going out to-night!"

"Borrowing a rod and doing some night-fishing, chief?"

"No, I'm interested in bigger game than that. Sit down over there by the window. Not a word!"

The detective snapped out the light, and then opened the door a few inches. He pulled a chair into such a position that he was able to watch the dark corridor without himself being seen.

For nearly an hour the pair sat silently. Tommy's nerves were keyed up. The weird story of the black hand was not a pleasant thing to think

# The Insane Boy

about. Tommy was glad that he had slipped an automatic into his pocket before leaving Dover Street.

Suddenly there was the faint noise of a door being opened in the corridor. A man went by the room, treading quietly. The light from a window shone on his face for a moment. The man was Dr Walker, and he carried a small case tucked under one arm.

A whisper from Hawke brought Tommy to his feet. The pair followed the man on tip-toe, and were in time to see him let himself out of a side door of the inn. He crossed a patch of moonlight as he went towards the tow-path of the river.

"Funny!" Tommy whispered. "How did he get fat like that round the tummy all at once!"

"That," said Dixon Hawke grimly, "is what we are going to find out!"

## A Mystery Unfolds.

**A**FTER following the tow-path for some distance, Dr Walker branched off across a meadow. It brought him to the high wall which surrounded the Conyer home.

Hawke and Tommy, watching the shadows, saw the man open a small door and enter the garden. After waiting some minutes they followed, finding themselves in the kitchen garden at the rear of the house.

There was no sign of the doctor, but Hawke led the way to the front of the building. As he reached the shrubbery near the lawn, he dropped to hands and knees, signalling his assistant to do the same thing.

They crawled forward several yards. Then they halted at the sight of a man standing amongst the bushes in front. There was sufficient light from the stars to make out the silhouette of a Van Dyke beard.

Dr Walker was uncoiling a length of silk cord. One end was weighted, and he began to whirl the cord in a clockwise direction. As the weight hissed close to

the detectives they could see that it was a small grapnel.

Tommy remembered the strange claw marks on the window-sill of the tower-room. He knew, now, how they had been made.

Suddenly the cord slipped through the man's fingers, to run upwards in a perfect coat to the window far above. There was a faint tinkle as the grapnel caught.

Dr Walker stepped back, fastening the free end of the cord to a bush. The dull, black colouring of the silk made it invisible, but it stretched at a steep angle from ground to window.

Hawke's hand closed on his assistant's arm in a vice-like grip. Walker was busy in the darkness taking off his coat. He seemed to be unwrapping something which had been wound about his waist. It was too dark to see what it was.

There was an angry hissing. Then the man stood up. Under his chin was tucked a violin. He drew the bow slowly to and fro, producing a soft and monotonous chord. Again and again it was repeated. There was something hypnotic about that strange music.

A cry bubbled up to Tommy's lips, checked before he could utter it by a warning pressure of Hawke's hand.

Something was gliding up the silk cord to the tower-room, climbing with a strange corkscrew movement. It was a black band, nearly five feet in length and a good four inches in width. Because of the invisible colouring of the cord the mysterious band seemed to be suspended in mid-air.

## The Black "Band."

**T**HE wailing of the violin grew louder, commanding. The thing which was gliding towards Peter Conyer's window increased its pace, but for a moment a pair of beady green eyes shone out of the darkness.

"Chief! Chief!" gasped Tommy.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"It's all right!" exclaimed Dixon Hawke.

He bounded to his feet, his hand going to a side pocket and coming out with a squat automatic. Three times the criminologist pulled the trigger. Orange flame spat from the muzzle of the gun. There was the thud of a bullet striking the creature on the rope.

With a dreadful hiss it uncoiled itself and dropped—dropped upon the shoulders of Dr Walker.

A scream of terror rang through the darkness. The tall man plunged forward, dragging at the hand which was wrapped about him. He staggered when he was a few paces from the detectives and dropped to his knees.

A ray of light stabbed out as Hawke turned on a flash he had brought with him. The shaded beam showed a dreadful thing.

The mysterious black hand was an Indian cobra. The creature was coiled about Walker's head and shoulders, and its own head swayed above him like the bloom of a flower.

Hawke fired point-blank, each shot lodging in the hideous wedge-shaped head. Slowly the coils loosened and the snake slid to the ground. Tommy despatched it with a hail of lead from his automatic.

"The black hand!" he gasped. "A snake!"

"I knew that," Hawke said, "after I heard about Walker's strange interest in milk. He did not drink out of a saucer, as the waiter thought—that was the snake!"

### The Biter Bitten!

**S**HOOTS came from the house and a few seconds later a big man, wearing a dressing-gown and carrying a shot-gun, rushed out into the garden. His voice boomed out fiercely.

"Who's shooting?"

"Come over here, Mr Dawson!" Hawke called. "I have the evidence to satisfy you that your ward is sane!"

The lawyer approached, still holding his shot-gun with the muzzle pointing in the direction of the detectives. Then he gave a choking cry as he saw the twitching body of the cobra.

Silently Hawke pointed to the silk cord which stretched to the window of Peter Conyer's room. Then he turned his light until it shone full upon the crouching figure of Dr Walker.

"The most terrible thing I have ever had to investigate, Mr Dawson," he said. "This man was haunting your ward with a snake—the black hand the poor lad spoke about. He hypnotised it with certain notes on the violin and recalled it, I gather, by the same means. He has a great knowledge of snakes!"

"He was trying to kill my ward!" the lawyer whispered. "Trying to kill him so that he would get Dr Conyer's money?"

"He had not the courage to kill," Hawke said savagely. "Yet, if he had succeeded, his crime would have been greater than murder. He was trying to drive Peter insane—trying to make you believe him insane!"

"And I would have condemned the poor lad to an asylum—perhaps for life!" Mr Dawson shuddered.

He gripped his gun and took a step towards the crouching man. Walker lifted his head and looked at him.

"Don't shoot!" he whispered. "It isn't necessary. That snake—I took its poison see out a year ago. I didn't know that it had grown another!"

"Jove!" gasped Dixon Hawke. "Quick, Tommy—get a doctor from the village!"

It was too late. Even as Tommy moved to obey, a hideous rattle came from Walker's throat. His face slowly blackened with the poison the serpent's fang had injected into him.

"Dead!" Hawke said quietly.

So the doctor paid for his misdeeds, and in a month or so young Peter had recovered completely from his dreadful experiences.

# THE CASE OF *The Lazy Painter*



"I KNOW I shouldn't have come to you, Mr Hawke."

The girl who spoke was sitting on the edge of a seat in Hawke's study, her hands clenched in her lap.

Despite her tension and her nervousness, she was pretty and charming, and Tommy Burke kept glancing up at her from his desk as he took notes.

"You're probably too busy to help me, and—unless I get the shares back, I can't afford to pay for your services. But—please try to help me. The shares were all I had—I was absolutely dependent on them."

Dixon Hawke leaned back in his chair, and smiled reassuringly.

"I don't see why you shouldn't come to me, Miss Harvey. After all, recovering stolen goods is part of my job, you know! Who suggested that I would be too busy?"

"My uncle. I—I really think he hasn't much faith in what he calls 'amateur' detectives, Mr Hawke. If you come, he'll probably be rather rude."

"I'll have to try to give him a better impression of criminologists," smiled Hawke. "Now, supposing you tell me exactly what happened."

"Then you will help me!" Fay Harvey's eyes lit up.

"Let's say, rather, I'll do all I can," said Hawke.

Much of the girl's nervousness disappeared, and she told her story well. Tommy's pencil slid quickly over the pages.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Early the previous morning Fay Harvey had awakened to discover that her room had been ransacked during the night, and a locked portfolio containing four share certificates, representing a hundred shares apiece in a prosperous company, had been stolen.

A few pounds in notes, two diamond rings, and several small items of jewellery had also been taken.

Immediately on discovering the theft, she had told her uncle, Septimus Harvey, with whom she was living. He had called in the police without delay, but the police apparently held small hopes of being able to get the valuables back.

"The trouble is that the shares are worth over a thousand pounds," said Fay Harvey. "It isn't a lot, but they would bring me in fifty pounds a year. Uncle isn't wealthy, and I—I can't do ordinary work. I had a serious illness last year, and I haven't fully recovered. The doctors tell me that unless I take things very carefully for a long time to come, I'm liable to become ill again. My—my heart isn't very strong."

Hawke pursed his lips.

"I've known doctors say that about a patient who has lived to be eighty," he said, and Tommy knew that he spoke thus to try to reassure the girl. "Was there anyone else at the house?"

"My aunt is there always, of course. And Ricky, my fiance, was spending the week-end with us. He's doing important war work in the Midlands, and doesn't often get away, so he stays with us when he does get down south."

"I see," said Hawke. "Well, I'll come along a little later in the day, Miss Harvey, and see what I can do. By the way, do you remember the name of the police inspector in charge of the case?"

"Yes," said Fay promptly. "Inspector Carter, of the Surrey Police. He says it's quite obvious that the thief came in by my window, but I can't understand why I didn't wake up. Usually I'm a very light sleeper."

"You didn't take a drink—of milk,

or anything like that—before going to bed, did you?"

"Yes, I had my usual cup of cocoa; uncle brought it to me."

"I see," said Hawke, and a few minutes afterwards saw the girl out.

### The Disgruntled Inspector.

WHEN Hawke returned to the study, Tommy was reading through the notes he had taken, and looked up eagerly.

"What do you make of it, gu'nor!"

"What do you is more to the point!" smiled Hawke.

"Well—it looks as if it was an inside job, doesn't it? The poor kid was dragged to make her sleep heavily—that's why you asked whether she had anything before going to bed. From what I can gather, Uncle Septimus is a pretty nasty specimen, not wealthy, and well able to use those shares. No wonder he didn't want her to come to see you!"

Hawke pursed his lips.

"You're jumping ahead a bit, old son. That doesn't mean that you're not right, mind you—but I've known many oldish men who've no faith in private detectives. Slip out and get the car, will you? I'll be ready by the time you're back."

Tommy collected his hat, and went out. Hawke put through a telephone call to the Surrey Police at Epsom, where the girl lived, and was soon speaking to Inspector Carter.

The policeman had never met Hawke, and seemed startled when Hawke told him what case he was on.

"It's hardly the kind of thing you'll be interested in," he said, and Hawke imagined he sounded a little abrupt. "A thief got in by her window, which can easily be reached, and which she leaves wide open every night. He took what there was, and probably threw the share certificates away—they wouldn't be of any value to an ordinary thief."



# The Lazy Painter

"You've no idea who it was!" Hawke asked.

"No." Carter definitely sounded irritable. "We've had a number of black-out burglaries, and it's undoubtedly one of the series. My view is that you're wasting your time, Mr Hawke."

"I'll have a look round all the same," said Hawke.

A few minutes later he told Tommy that Carter did not view his appearance on the scene with any enthusiasm, but that was not unusual.

## Hawke Gets His Character.

**D**OWNS AVENUE, where the Harveys lived, was a wide road in a residential district not far from the famous race-course.

The house itself, The Croft, however, was rather dilapidated, although parked in the drive was a barrow announcing—

"Joe Lofting, Painter and Decorator."

Tommy frowned as he looked at the house, with its paint peeling badly, and a number of other signs of neglect.

"It certainly needs a good coat of paint, gov'nor."

"And as far as I can see, it's getting one inside," said Hawke. He could see a man in white overalls standing near a window slapping a brush up and down on one of the walls. As they drew nearer, the man stopped his work to have a look at them.

A red-faced man with a comical expression, he made no secret of his curiosity.

Hawke and Tommy passed out of his view, and shortly afterwards they were admitted to The Croft by Fay Harvey. Except that she looked rather pale, there was little to suggest that she was ill, or recovering from a long illness.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said. "I hope you'll be able to get along with uncle. He's been extremely angry since I told him I'd consulted you."

Tommy and Hawke in the ribs as Hawke made no response to this, and they were taken quickly into a large lounge, overcrowded with furniture.

By a bureau was a man who looked nearer seventy than sixty. Hawke imagined, white-haired, thin-faced, and disagreeable of countenance.

Sitting somewhat nervously on a nearby chair was a little, meek-looking woman dressed in black, and with a high net collar, a relic of Victorian days.

"Uncle, this is——" began Fay.

"Who do you think I imagine it is?" growled Septimus Harvey in a harsh voice. "The King of Siam! Lot of nonsense bringing an amateur detective here. Tells you he won't want paying unless he recovers your goods, does he? Don't believe it! He'll do nothing and then send in a huge account."

He glared at Hawke, while his wife, the woman in black, made an ineffectual protest, which Hawke thought was—

"Do be patient, Septimus."

Hawke smiled, but Tommy felt like snapping out an angry retort.

"Believe it or not, Mr Harvey, if I don't find your niece's lost property I won't expect payment," Hawke assured the angry old man.

"Well, what are you wasting your time for, then?" growled Harvey. "If the police can't find it, it's a sure thing you can't. What do you think the police are for?"

"I've a considerable respect for them," Hawke assured him, "but they do miss important points sometimes."

"And you come along and smell them out, do you?" sneered Septimus Harvey.

Tommy's lips tightened, but Hawke remained good-humoured.

At last Harvey apparently thought a little better of his attitude, and gave grudging permission for Hawke to examine his niece's room. He insisted on accompanying Hawke, Tommy and Fay.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

The open door of a room opposite the lounge showed that the decorators were busy—the room was empty of furniture which explained the crowded lounge, and there were dust sheets covering the floor.

As they reached the landing, the slap-slap-slap of a whitewash brush being wielded met their ears. It stopped as they opened the door of the girl's room, and Hawke, glancing over his shoulder, saw the alert red face of the workman peering round the door, a cigarette in one hand and his brush in the other.

Harvey turned on his heel sharply. "Get on with your work, Lofting! Do you think I want the house turned upside down all the time?"

Lofting's face disappeared promptly, and the slap-slap-slap began again, reluctantly.

Somewhat to his surprise, Hawke found the girl's room a charmingly furnished one, and newly decorated.

### The Splashed Wall.

A WALNUT wardrobe by one wall, facing the bed, had held the portfolio which had been stolen. The wardrobe had been locked, but Fay admitted the key had been left on her dressing-table.

"Criminal carelessness—deserve to lose your things," snapped Harvey. "Well, Mister Hawke!" He sneered out the word "mister." "Do you expect to solve the problem by just looking round the room?"

Hawke, as usual, ignored him and proceeded to examine the window. There were marks on the new paint of the sill, apparently caused by the heel of a boot or a shoe, and the paint on the window-frame was also scratched.

"I'd only been back in this room two days," Fay explained, "I'd been sleeping in the spare room."

"Isn't the decorating taking rather a long time?" asked Hawke.

"It's that lazy scoundrel, Lofting,"

snapped Harvey. "He can't get assistants, he says, and drags the work out himself."

"Tell me," said Hawke, "what room was being decorated when the robbery took place?"

"The one Lofting's in now," said Harvey. "But what's that got to do with it?"

"If the window had been left open to let the paper or paint dry," smiled Hawke.

"Don't talk nonsense! The thief came through Fay's window! The marks are there even for you to see."

Hawke appeared to accept that rebuff, much to Tommy's annoyance, and then led the way into the room where Lofting was working. The decorator now slapped away with great vigour, and splashings of distemper—he was doing the ceiling—streaked towards the party by the door.

"Stop that a minute!" snapped Harvey.

"Oh, orl right, orl right," grunted Lofting. "First I got to stop, then I got to go on, then I got to stop again—why don't you make up your mind?"

"Don't be impertinent!" Harvey shouted.

"Okay, okay. I'll leave the job. I've got plenty more to do," retorted Lofting. "And you won't get no one else to finish it, see!" He glared, but could not prevent his red face from looking comical. Standing on the top of his ladder, he glowered down, while Hawke looked about the room.

"Isn't it unusual to paper the walls and then distemper the ceiling?" he inquired.

"Course it is," said Lofting promptly. "Mr Harvey there, he told me what colour to distemper the ceiling, then when the paper was up, he see he wants a different colour."

"It was wrong in the first place, and you know it!" snapped Harvey. "You'll do your work according to specification or I won't accept it. And—and look! Look at that!" The old man went red

# The Lazy Painter

in the face. "I've never seen such disgraceful work—outrageous! Look at the blisters in that wallpaper! Just look at them!"

Lofting came hurriedly down from his ladder, shouting—

"Leave that paper alone! Think I don't know my job? Leave it alone, I tell you!"

As he rushed across the room, his foot kicked against a bucket of distemper. It was a deep cream, and it shot across the room, splashing Harvey's trousers, Fay's shoes, and Tommy's coat. Hawke just managed to dodge aside, but a shower of the distemper landed on the wall where Harvey had been criticising the bulging paper.

Lofting stopped abruptly, and drew a deep breath.

"Now see what you've done!" he gasped in a squeaky voice. "Now that paper will have to come off."

"What I've done!" retorted Harvey. "You did it yourself. You're a disgrace to your trade."

## The Rich Fiance.

**T**OMMY thought that the painter and the old man would come to blows, and it was perhaps as well that there was interruption. From downstairs a hearty voice called—

"Hallo, hallo, folks!" Footsteps sounded on the stairs, and Fay's cheeks took on a delicate flush.

"That's Ricky!" she exclaimed.

Before she could get to the passage, her fiance reached the room.

Tommy had an impression of a big, broad-shouldered, rugged-faced man, smiling widely until he saw the mess about the room. Then he drew up short and, ignoring Fay, said sharply—

"What the deuce is happening here? More expense?"

"There's been a little accident," Fay began.

"Accident!" snorted Ricky, whose other name, it transpired, was Grey. "Accident! First it was a second coat

of distemper for the ceiling, now it's another lot of paper for the wall. What is this, Harvey—a racket between you and Lofting? When I said I'd pay for my room and Fay's I didn't mean I'd spend a fortune!"

Harvey looked as if he would start another shouting match, but Fay managed to quieten them down, and made the necessary introductions.

Ricky Grey remained disgruntled, obviously with fairly good reason. Septimus Harvey had declared he could not afford to have the house re-decorated, badly though it needed it, and Grey had offered to pay for Fay's room, and the one he used when staying at the house, and the uncle was to pay for the rest of the work that he wanted done.

Apparently the second coat of distemper had put the cost up, and now a large patch of the wall required re-painting. But Grey apologised to Hawke for his outburst, when Harvey had left the room.

"I'm sorry about that, Mr Hawke, but he is an aggravating man, and—Fay won't mind me saying so—he's inclined to take advantage of the fact that I'm rather better off than he is. He borrows on the strength of my engagement to Fay."

"It's hateful!" Fay exclaimed.

"But it isn't helping Mr Hawke," said Ricky Grey with a smile. "I'm rather afraid the scent is cold, though."

"I wouldn't say that, yet," said Hawke. "Let me have a few minutes with my assistant, will you?"

"We'll see you downstairs," said Grey.

With the girl, he went down. Hawke took Tommy along the passage, and said in a low-pitched voice—

"Well! What do you make of it?"

"Harvey's a miserable old devil!" exclaimed Tommy. "But as for proving he took the shares, well, I don't see how it could be done. I'm beaten, gov'nor."

Hawke smiled as he said—

"I think I know where the shares

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

are, and we'll find out soon who took them! There are three possibilities—Harvey, Lofting, and young Grey, and I believe the first or the last is working with the decorator.

"I'm going to call Lofting out, and downstairs," said Hawke. "When he's away go into the room where he's working, and pull away the wallpaper where it's pasted on so badly."

"Do you think the share certificates are hidden under the paper?"

"I do," said Hawke decisively. "I think the theft was done from inside the house, and that a patch of wallpaper was stuck over the shares. The paste would not hurt them, and when the police stop searching, the paper can be taken away. I—wait a minute! There's Lofting talking out of the window."

### When Thieves Fall Out—

**T**OGETHER Hawke and Tommy crept towards the room where the painter was working. Lofting was speaking in a low-pitched voice, and they heard him say—

"They're on to it. I saw 'Awke watching the paper; he ain't no fool. I'm goin' ter take them away pretty soon, see?"

"Shut up, you fool!" came the answer—in Ricky Grey's voice—from beneath the window!

Hawke and Tommy kept out of sight. Grey roared up the stairs in a few seconds, and burst into the empty room. There was a heated argument between the two men, and finally Lofting snapped—

"I'm not goin' to 'ave them left there, I tell you!"

"You won't touch the paper!" growled Grey.

"Why, you——" began Lofting.

A moment later there was a number of thuds, a muttering of curses.

Hawke and Tommy ran upstairs, and, keeping out of sight, they found Lofting and Grey fighting desperately.

Lofting had managed to keep hold of the brush, and struck at Grey's face. Grey gasped and drew back, blinded by the distemper which went into his eyes and dripped from his face to his clothes.

Lofting pushed him further away, grabbed a knife, and started to work feverishly at the wallpaper where Harvey had pointed out the blisters.

Hawke and Tommy watched him unobserved. After a few minutes the wallpaper came off—and then from the wall Lofting took a large, printed sheet of paper.

Tommy exclaimed—"You were right, gu'nor!"

Lofting heard him, and swung round. He grabbed at the brush again, but Tommy, warned by what had happened to Grey, tackled him low.

Lofting crashed to the floor, while from below came Harvey, Fay, and the old woman. They arrived in time to see Lofting and Grey both handcuffed.

Hawke stepped to the girl's side.

"I wish this had worked out differently, Miss Harvey, but at least you've been saved from marriage to a scoundrel. It's quite evident that Grey planned this theft well ahead. He put drugs in your cocoa, and had your uncle give it to you. He also made marks on your window-sill to make it appear an outside burglary, and I think he even had the ceiling wrongly distempered, so that a second papering—because the first would be splashed badly—would be needed, and no suspicions aroused. Don'tless, if the certificates were found, he had counted on passing the blame on to your uncle."

"The—the tarnation scoundrel!" snorted Harvey.

Fay looked very pale, but Hawke thought that she would not suffer too much from the discovery. And he was proved right in that, as well as in his theory of the robbery and Grey's motives.

Moreover, not long afterwards, he learned that Fay's health was much improved.

# THE CASE OF *The Six-Hitter*



"**H**AWKE, I really am terribly worried," said Colonel Deen over the phone. "I know you must be tremendously busy, but if you could get here for the week-end I'd be greatly obliged."

"I think I can manage that," replied Hawke. "But what is the trouble?"

"Er—I don't really like to say over the telephone," said Deen. "It can keep until this afternoon. Grand day, too, grand! Bring that youngster of yours along—say, I say! he plays cricket, doesn't he? Useful bat, if I remember rightly. Well, I can find him a game. Two mixed sides of Army and Air Force, on my pitch, but we're a man short. Make it two o'clock, will you? Good man!"

The colonel rang off, and Dixon Hawke looked across his study at Tommy with a twinkle in his eye.

"That was Colonel Deen, who remembers you can use a bat, old son. We're off for a week-end to mix pleasure with business."

It was useless to guess at the colonel's problem Hawke knew, and he and Tommy gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the drive to Deen's Surrey home. Hawke had once helped the colonel, and he remembered the lovely grounds of Deen Lodge, and the cricket pitch in which the colonel took tremendous pride.

There had been little time for games owing to the war, but Tommy soon had his cricket kit out of its corner.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

He was puzzled, as was Hawke, by Deen's message, but Hawke imagined Tommy was thinking more of the coming game than of the colonel's problem.

### The Stolen Necklace.

HAWKE knew that Deen Lodge had been thrown open to officers and men of the services billeted nearby, and that the colonel organised as many matches as he could for the men.

A tall, grey-haired man, devoted to cricket, but also to his country, Deen was likely to do nothing by half-measures. He was rather talkative, Hawke knew, but sincere in all he did.

As he turned the big car into the drive gates beside the lodge, Hawke frowned. A policeman was standing in the middle of the drive with his hand raised. Tommy forgot his cricket, then.

"Hallo, this looks like trouble," he exclaimed.

"I'm afraid so," said Hawke, slowing down. "Good-afternoon, constable. My name is Dixon Hawke, and I arranged to see Colonel Deen here at two o'clock."

The policeman's red face showed instant respect.

"That's all right, sir. The colonel and the inspector are expecting you."

"What's the trouble?" asked Hawke.

"Well, I couldn't rightly say, but there's been a robbery," said the constable. "The colonel's secretary got hurt bad, too."

"It looks like good-bye to cricket," said Tommy as Hawke drove along the drive. "It's a pity the colonel didn't ask you to get here earlier—you might have prevented the trouble."

"It's useless to jump to conclusions," said Hawke. "But it's remarkable that—if there's been a robbery of any importance—he should have phoned me at eleven o'clock. About midday is hardly the time most burglars are active."

Pulling the car up outside the big, Georgian mansion, Hawke hurried up the steps. Tommy followed, and another policeman asked them their names, but admitted them immediately on being told.

In a long, well-furnished study, which Hawke remembered well, Colonel Deen and the local inspector were standing.

Deen's fresh-coloured face seemed rather pale, and his eyes were tired. The inspector, in plain clothes, was a big, florid-looking man, with shrewd grey eyes.

Deen introduced them, saying:

"And I think the inspector had best tell you about it, Hawke. It's got me beaten—absolutely beaten!"

Inspector Randall began apologetically.

"I'm afraid it's also puzzling me, Mr Hawke, and I don't mind telling you I shall be very glad of your help. I'd classify it as the most puzzling and daring robbery I've ever met. A diamond necklace, worth nearly three thousand pounds, was stolen between noon and one o'clock, and the secretary was actually in the room when it were stolen. He was badly injured, but has been able to talk. He swears that the door was locked and that no one came in by the window. And that's pretty well certain, too!"

"It sounds impossible," put in Tommy.

"That's what I think," said Randall ruefully. "But it happened. Supposing I try to reconstruct the case, Mr Hawke."

"That would be a good idea," said Hawke.

### The Broken Sash.

RANDALL led the way to a small room adjoining the library. Deen followed. The room was plainly furnished, and in one corner stood a large safe, the door of which was open. In the room were a desk and some filing cabinets.

"This is the room where the crime

## The Six-Hitter

was committed," said Randall. "The secretary, Mr Mortimer, works here. Usually the safe contains files and important papers belonging to the estate, but the small jewel safe in the colonel's room is out of order, and the diamonds were put here for safety. Mortimer had some work to do, and, as usual, locked his door. The window, you see, is open about four inches at the top, not enough for a man to squeeze through. The sash is broken and that prevents the window from being opened any more—you can see that for yourself."

Hawke checked up; the window was immovable.

"Mortimer says that he was sitting here," said Randall, tapping the desk. "As you see, it faces the door. The door was locked and it did not open. But he was badly injured by a blow on the back of the head. He had no warning of anything."

Deen broke in. "It's absurd—absurd! Mortimer has been with me for fifteen years, and I trust him implicitly!"

"Well," said Dixon Hawke reasonably, "he wasn't hit on the head by a ghost, you know. If no one came in while he was here, someone had been waiting for him to arrive. Would the safe be open when he entered?"

"No, it was locked. The keys are on his desk. They had been used, but wiped clean of fingerprints."

"A careful thief," admitted Hawke.

### The Three Suspects.

"WELL, on the face of things, the way in which the crime was committed is easy to see," declared Hawke at last.

"I'm blowed if I think so!" exclaimed Randall.

Hawke smiled, and demonstrated, stepping to the big safe, which reached nearly to his shoulder, standing about two feet from the wall on one side and flush with it on the other.

"The thief entered the room before

Mortimer, either with the help of a key or by using a pick-lock. When Mortimer came in, the thief hid behind the safe—there is just room for a man to get between it and the outer wall, you see. Mortimer, sitting at his desk, had his back turned towards the man who, using some weapon, struck him down, took the keys, opened the safe, and then went out with the jewels."

"That's plausible, Mr Hawke, but it's not so easy as all that! There was a note of satisfaction in Randall's voice. "The colonel was giving a lunch to the players in this afternoon's game. All the servants, except Mortimer and an old footman, Graves, were in the cricket pavilion, helping with the lunch. Graves was dusting on the landing all the time. Only two men passed him, and therefore only two could have entered the room."

"They are two Air Force officers who arrived yesterday," Deen broke in. "Excellent fellows, both of them. They have a room—they're sharing one here while billeted in the district. Immediately the robbery was discovered—"

"Who discovered it?"

"Graves, the footman. I had sent him for Mortimer, who should have been in the pavilion. Graves went to get him, and found him lying across his desk."

"That was less than five minutes after the two R.A.F. men had come in," put in Randall. "They volunteered to have their rooms and persons searched immediately. Nothing at all was found there. I thought possibly one of them had done it, and thrown the diamonds out of the window—there's a shrubbery immediately below. But I've had it searched thoroughly, and there's no trace of them."

Tommy Burke drew a deep breath.

"This is a tough one to crack, guv'nor!"

"Ye-es," said Hawke slowly. "I'd like to see Graves and the two R.A.F. officers. Can that be arranged?"

"Of course," said Deen, and went off immediately. Randall said slowly;

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"Graves is the obvious suspect, I think, Mr Hawke, but there again is a thing I can't get over. He isn't really strong enough to have delivered the blow which put Mortimer out."

"What weapon was used?" asked Hawke.

"An ebony ruler, from Mortimer's desk."

"Hmm," said Hawke, and Tommy broke in:

"Graves could be lying, gov'nor. If he's working with someone else, that someone might be strong enough to have delivered the blow. How long has he been employed by the colonel?"

"I remember the man from last time," said Hawke. "He must be turned seventy, and——"

### At The Cricket Practice.

HAWKE broke off, for the old footman entered. White-haired, obviously distressed, he repeated his story, and Randall admitted it was word-for-word with what he had said before.

"I'm sure no one but the two R.A.F. gentlemen came in," said Graves in a shaky voice. "Mr Hawke, I'm not accusing them, but—but solve the case, please. I know the police suspect me. I know they think I'm lying! But no one else passed me except Mr Mortimer, I'll swear to it!"

Hawke put a hand on his shoulder, reassuringly.

"We'll get at the truth, Graves, don't worry. I——"

He broke off suddenly, for from somewhere outside there came a shout, and Tommy, looking towards the window, exclaimed:

"By George, what a hit!"

Hawke, following his assistant's gaze, saw a cricket ball hurtling through the air.

Stepping closer to the window, he saw the cricket field and a dozen or so white-clad figures, two of whom were coming after the ball. It disappeared with a

thump in the shrubbery outside the window, and the white-clad figures soon disappeared, too, in their search.

"It was certainly some hit," agreed Hawke. "It must be all of a hundred yards from the wicket. They're only practising, though, as far as I can see. You've a chance of a game yet, old son!"

Randall said sharply:

"I should think there's something more than a game at stake, Mr Hawke!"

Hawke smiled, while Graves went out of the room, obviously very much distressed.

### The R.A.F. Men.

RANDALL frowned when the door closed, and said:

"He put up a good show, but he's lying, I'm sure."

"It's possible," agreed Hawke, "but——"

Thump! Across his words there came a loud sound, and Tommy, by the window, exclaimed:

"By George, that fellow's a second Jeckop! He sent the ball against the wall full toss! And—by jingo, here's another!"

This time the ball fell clean into the shrubbery. From the field came another burst of shouting and laughing.

Then Hawke and Tommy saw Colonel Deen cross over to the batsman who was letting himself go so wholeheartedly. He was being bowled at in a practice net by half-a-dozen men, while the players waited for the game to start.

"He's quite a little fellow," said Tommy. "And he's coming away with the colonel, too!"

"He's one of the two R.A.F. men," said Randall.

A few minutes later, perspiring a little, and with a colourful blazer over his white shirt, the R.A.F. man entered.

He was a small, wiry man, who hardly looked capable of swiping a ball so far. With him was another man, of



## The Six-Hitter

medium height. They were introduced, the small man as Flight-Lieutenant Ford, and the second as Flying-Officer Garnett.

"You seem to be enjoying yourselves, gentlemen," said Hawke.

Garnett laughed good-naturedly. He was holding a cricket ball in his hand, and another bulged in his pocket.

"This man has, sir. But I've been staying by the shrubbery, hunting for the balls Ford loses. I think he's trying to break this window!"

"Well, let's get down to business," said Hawke, and began to ask several questions.

### A Mysterious Phone Call.

THE R.A.F. men's stories were identical with what they had already told, and when they had gone Colonel Deen said hopelessly:

"You see, Hawke,—there's no solution, positively none at all!"

"I'm afraid you mean, sir, that the solution is one you don't like to admit," said Randall. "Graves, the footman, must be lying. I'll take him to the station for questioning."

Deen looked worried.

"I—I suppose that's inevitable. But Graves! I can't believe it, I just can't!"

Hawke said slowly: "Before you do anything definite, Randall, let me ask the colonel this—what was worrying you when you phoned for me, Deen?"

Deen smoothed down his white hair.

"I had almost forgotten that, Hawke, absurd though it sounds. I had a mysterious telephone call, telling me that several suspicious characters were amongst the guests here to-day. Army and Air Force men, all of them. I found it hard to believe, but thought I had best have a word with you. I've told the inspector."

"What did you make of it?" Hawke asked Randall.

"It looked to me as if someone was trying to throw suspicion on the guests even before the robbery," said Randall. "That is another reason why I suspect Graves so strongly."

"Ye-es," said Hawke. "I'm with you part of the way—it was an effort to throw suspicion on the cricketers, and therefore suggests someone in the household was concerned. Wait a moment, Inspector! There's one thing—in fact, two—which have so far been missed. First, that someone could have been in the room after Mortimer was found, hidden behind the safe, or under the desk, until the injured man was discovered, and then escaped in the ensuing confusion. Graves would thus be vindicated—he could not testify to anything that happened after the discovery of the injured man."

"But who could it be?" demanded Randall.

"Someone who knew Mortimer," said Hawke quietly, "and who planned the theft with him. Don't interrupt, Colonel, please! I know Mortimer has been a trusted servant. I know also that, as he is hurt, his guilt seems impossible. But the assumption that someone was hiding does, on reflection, seem weak."

"You yourself explained how it could happen!" objected Randall sharply.

"Yes—I had to explore the possibility. But supposing Mortimer was the criminal and was working with an accomplice? Mortimer would expect to find the man in the room, but not to be attacked—I presume that his accomplice double-crossed him. Mortimer, expecting no trouble, had prepared a way of getting the jewels out of the room so that no one who was searched could be implicated."

"But——" began Randall, while the colonel stood staring in bewilderment at Hawke.

"You've searched outside, I know," interrupted Hawke. "However—look at the gap at the top of the window

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

towards the right. If a right-handed man stood close to it and threw something out, where would it go?"

### A Lucky Hit.

THE others crowded towards the window, and as they did so there was the click of a bat from the cricket field, and again the ball came sailing towards the window.

Little Ford was standing with his bat still in the air, and the other cricketers were staring after the flying ball.

"I believe he's trying to hit that tree!" exclaimed Tommy. "And, by Jingo, he's managed it. Gosh, what a hit! I——" Tommy broke off suddenly, and enthusiasm gave way to intense excitement. "Guv'nor—something's dislodged from the tree—something shiny. I reckon——"

Hawke snapped: "Get outside, and in a hurry, Tommy! The diamonds were flung out and lodged in the tree—they've fallen now, and I fancy someone will be there to get them."

Tommy was first out of the door. The others followed at a good rate, but Tommy was the first to reach the side door near the shrubbery and the tree.

He saw a heavily-built man peering into the foliage of the tree, and suddenly the man uttered a grunt of satisfaction, dashed forward and grabbed at the string of diamonds hanging on a branch!

He turned to creep away, but Tommy had, by now, reached him.

The man kicked and struck out at the youngster, but Tommy evaded the effort, then jumped in with a pile-driver to the stomach. The blow winded the man, making him double up and drop the jewels. Before he had recovered, Hawke and the others had arrived.

"Do you recognise this fellow?" Hawke asked Deen.

"Why—why, yes. It's White, one of my gardeners!"

White was gasping on the ground, but heard the words and shouted:

"It weren't my idea. Mortimer did it, see!"

"Good gad!" exclaimed Randall. "You were right, Hawke!"

And so it proved. Mortimer had planned the burglary, and tried to prepare the police for searching among the cricketers for the criminal. He had paid White to help him, but, overcome with avarice, White had tried to get away with the diamonds. Mortimer, however, had managed to throw the jewels out of the window, as pre-arranged.

White knew they were in the tree, hence the fact that he hung about, meaning to climb up for them at the first opportunity.

The big hit had saved him the trouble—and, as Hawke said, had helped to solve the case.

"You had a pretty good idea of what had happened before that, though," said Tommy Burke.

"Yes," agreed Hawke. "I examined the two theories, and after dismissing the first, which meant accepting Mortimer's innocence, I dwelt on the second. It was assumed that he had not known when he was being attacked. Supposing he did know and had put up a fight! Then he would not just have dropped the necklace out of the window, but would have flung it—and a right-handed man would fling it towards the tree which Ford was using for target practice. White felt quite safe; even if Mortimer recovered, he would not dare to tell the truth."

"Marvellous!" exclaimed Deen. "I do wish Mortimer had not proved a rogue, but—d'you know, Hawke, it's better Mortimer than one of those splendid fellows playing to-day. And that reminds me—did you bring your flannels, young fellow?"

"Rather!" exclaimed Tommy.

"Good, good! Then hurry and change—we'll be a little late of starting, I'm afraid, but better late than never."

# THE CASE OF

# *The Shifting Path*



**T**HE train stopped with a jerk. For the past hour it had crawled through the dark countryside, with the off-stage noises of a blitz testing the nerves of the passengers.

But now it had stopped altogether, and the guard, moving from coach to coach, broke the bad news to the travellers.

"Time-bomb on the line! We're not going on until they've fixed it!"

He looked into a first-class compartment. It was occupied by a tall, distinguished man, and a young fellow who greeted the official with a cheerful remark.

"Can't we get out and pick some daisies?"

"If you like!" The guard smiled at Tommy Burke. "They've dropped a delayed-action bomb ahead of us.

Weren't you getting out at Ashcombe, Mr Hawke?"

The man in the corner nodded. As he leaned forward, the glow of his pipe lit up the lean lines of his face. Dixon Hawke was feeling bored.

"How far are we from the village?" he asked.

"Two miles, sir. We're close to the road, and you can walk it if you like. I'll have your luggage put out at the station when we do get there."

"Right! Are you ready to face the black-out, Tommy?"

"And the Home Guard!" added the young fellow with a yawn.

They left the train and climbed through some wire to a country lane. All was quiet, but as they stepped out,

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the wail of the "Raiders passed" signal came from some distant town. Dixon Hawke glanced at the luminous dial of his watch.

It was ten minutes to one—a late hour to be arriving at the house of his friend, Colonel Carther of Ashcombe.

The detective had been looking forward to a quiet week-end away from the hammering of the London guns, and he knew that Carther would be waiting up for them.

The night was misty. It was flat country crossed by several broad dikes running down to the sea. Hawke walked cautiously, afraid that the lane might skirt the edge of one of those belts of black water.

### A Drowning Tragedy.

**S**UDDENLY voices broke the silence. Round a bend tramped a number of men. Some of them carried lanterns, and others were staggering beneath the burden of a hurdle on which was a dark object covered by a policeman's cape.

Somebody challenged them gruffly, and the small procession halted. A constable came forward and flashed a shaded hall's-eye into the faces of the strangers. The barrels of several rifles glittered.

"Friends!" said Hawke. He brought out his papers. "The London train was held up," he explained. "As we were so near Ashcombe, I thought we might walk. Colonel Carther is expecting—"

"Very good, sir!"

The officer saluted, impressed by the name he had read on the documents. He jerked his thumb towards the hurdle.

"A fine how-to-do!" he said. "One of our Home Guard chaps must have lost his way in the mist. We picked him out, drowned, from the canal. It's mighty deep in these parts. Poor old Jack Taylor."

"A local man!"

"Been here all his life, and it's funny he should have met with this accident. Ah, well, death don't mean much these days! Did you say you were going to the Colonel's place?"

"Yes. Is it far from the village?"

"A bit of a step, sir, but you can shorten it if you take the path you'll come to just down the lane. You'll see the stile. It's painted white. There are some posts in the middle of the field to guide you. Just follow them until you reach the canal."

"It sounds dangerous. We don't know the district and might go over the bank in the mist."

"Not likely, sir!" said the constable, "there are two white posts marking the beginning of the footbridge. The colonel's meadow is on the other side. That was the area Taylor patrolled. The canal was his beat."

Hawke and Tommy bared their heads as the hurdle, serving as a stretcher for the dead man, was carried past them. It was a sad end for a patriotic citizen who had given his services to the Home Guard.

Continuing down the lane, the detective and his assistant found the stile and entered a large field. Here the thick mist was lifting, but it must have been much denser a few hours previously.

The darkness was bewildering, but as they went along they found an occasional post marking the path. The gurgle of water came from somewhere ahead.

"I'm not looking for a swim!" grumbled Tommy.

"We'll trust the constable, young 'un. He said the posts would guide us to the hridge."

Their feet sank into soft turf. There was not much of a path, but the posts were easy to see, being a few yards apart. Presently Hawke pointed to a couple of blurred objects, standing together like silent ghosts, which had loomed out of the night.

"The beginning of the footbridge," he said. "Our friend was right. Even

# The Shifting Path

in a thick mist one could not mistake the way. We'll soon be toasting ourselves at the colonel's fireside!"

"And the sooner the better!" answered Tommy. "No more trains for me, gov. If we can't get petroi for the car, let's trade it in for a horse and trap!"

He moved forward eagerly, going ahead of Hawke and stepping between the two posts on the bank of the canal. His head was turned to his employer and he was still talking when the detective suddenly gave a cry and jumped forward.

His strong hand caught Tommy by the shoulder, and hurled him backwards on to the wet turf.

"What on earth——" began the young fellow.

"The bridge, Tommy!" Hawke rasped. "It's gone! Another step and you would have been in the canal!"

## The Square Holes.

THERE was a drop of ten feet to the dark water far below. The side of the canal was steeply cut and slimy with mud.

There would be little chance of climbing out, and the victim would be swept along to the bar below Ashcombe, where the body of Taylor had been found.

Tommy shuddered. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. He hated canals like this, with their green slime and mysterious gurgles.

"I'm going to tell the constable a thing or two!" he declared. "Was he crazy to send us on such a path?"

"He certainly described these posts as marking the start of the bridge . . . Jove!"

"What now?"

"Look along to the right!"

A gust of wind from the distant sea rolled up the last of the mist. A few stars twinkled in the sky, and by their faint light reflected in the water of the dyke, Burke could see a footbridge some thirty yards away.

Tommy walked along the bank, towards it. There were no posts to mark where it started, but as he moved around, his toe caught in a hole and he tripped. The wrench to his ankle was luckily not serious, but very painful.

"First the constable tries to drown us by sending us on the wrong path, and then some blighter digs a hole right at the start of the bridge!" grumbled the young fellow. "Have they all gone haywire in Ashcombe?"

"Hold your horses, son," said Hawke. "We're on to a queer thing, I fancy."

He turned on a shaded torch and played it over the hole which had tripped Tommy. It was square. The earth was hard packed and had evidently been shielded from the elements by something filling the hole. There were some splinters of rotten wood at the bottom.

Twelve feet away, Hawke found another hole. Like the first, it was square. Down one side the turf was worn. This was the regular path to the bridge, and the detective followed it back for some distance. Occasionally he turned on his light.

"Tommy!"

"Yes, gov'nor!"

"What do you make of these?"

At regular intervals along the path were holes. They formed a line which gradually turned to merge with the row of posts in the centre of the field. Hawke gripped one of the posts and pulled it clear of the ground. It came out easily. He fitted it into one of the holes.

"You see?"

"Somebody moved the markers!" gasped Tommy.

"They put them back from the real path to the bridge so that anybody following them would end up in the canal. They moved the main posts also. It was a deliberate attempt to trap anybody who took the short cut to Colonel Carther's property."

"The Home Guard people, perhaps?" ventured Tommy. "It might have been an anti-invasion measure."

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"The constable would have warned us. And this job is freshly done, young 'un. Let's go back to where you almost fell into the canal."

They returned to the spot, and Hawke made a thorough examination of the bank. The glow from his flash showed deep scars in the muddy side of the canal. On the left something was caught up in a bush. He reached down and disentangled it.

The object was a khaki forage cap. Inside, on the lining, was a name printed in marking ink.

"John Taylor," said Hawke. "This is where the poor fellow went over. He was caught by the trick of the switched posts although he's a local man. Of course the mist was dense then."

"Was it a practical joke?"

"Country humour is often rough, but it wouldn't be murderous. And this was murder, Tommy! The whole village knew that Taylor walked Garnet Dyke as his beat. Nobody would have used the path after dark knowing that a quick-triggered Home Guard was near the bridge. No, this trap was planned to catch one person only—Taylor!"

"But the changing of the posts would soon be discovered, and——"

"No," said Hawke quietly, "I feel sure the murderer planned to return them to their proper positions before anybody else came this way. He hoped to make Taylor's death appear an accident!"

"Gosh, chief! Then he'll be returning here!"

"He may be back already," Hawke answered in an undertone. "And if he saw my light, he'll know his crime is discovered."

### The Silent Watch.

THE mist was drifting over the low land. From the canal came the gurgle of rising water. The wind sighed along the bank and rustled the tall grass.

Tommy found himself straining his

ears, waiting for the sound of footsteps which would herald the approach of the murderer. He wondered why the man dared wait so long to cover up the only evidence of his crime.

The complicated method he had chosen showed a native knowledge of the district, and an awareness of the Home Guard activities of Taylor. In fact, the killer was likely to be a man as well known locally as his victim.

"Hence his reason for delayed action murder," Hawke explained. "He had to have a water-tight alibi to cover the time when Taylor was guarding the canal."

"An alibi impossible to bust, gov."

"If we catch him moving back the posts, the circumstantial evidence will warrant an arrest. But I admit even then he has a chance of wriggling clear of the charge. He can claim he found the posts changed and was putting them right to prevent anybody else falling in the canal."

Hawke shook his head as he spoke. His teeth clamped on the stem of his cold pipe. He had to find a sure way of making the man give himself away.

### The Shots In The Mist.

A FAINT sound made Hawke swing round. The figure of a man loomed up nearby. The mist made it impossible to see who it was. Then there was the unmistakable click of a rifle bolt, and Hawke, seizing Tommy by the arm, threw him flat on the ground.

Two bullets whined over their heads. The reports roared through the night and brought frightened birds whirling up from the canal bank.

Somebody was running across the field towards the lane. As Tommy Burke started in pursuit, his employer pulled him back.

"Let him go!"

"But, Chief——"

"Quick! Help me move the posts so that they lead to the bridge!"

## The Shifting Path

"But——"

Tommy saw Hawke's face in the faint light. The lips were a thin, hard line, and the eyes held a peculiar brightness. The young fellow knew the look too well to make further protests, or ask questions.

Silently the pair lifted the posts and replaced them in the original holes. The mist thickened as they worked. Conditions were much as they had been when Taylor fell into the canal.

But now anybody who followed the

can't fire shots in Britain these days without rousing the district!"

Men were moving up through the mist. Voices called. Hawke waited patiently, although his assistant wished they were far away from the quick-triggered volunteers. He had no desire to be a human target.

To make matters worse, his companion coughed deliberately. There was a shout from the left and the shrill blast of a whistle. The line of men began to close in.



The line of Home Guards, their rifles at the ready, began to close in on Hawke and his assistant.

line of markers would arrive at the bridge. The path was safe again.

It had taken them less than ten minutes to change over the posts. Several times Hawke had glanced across the field towards the lane. All at once he whispered a warning.

"They're coming!"

"Who?"

"The local Home Guard unit. You

Hawke cupped his hands around his mouth. He called: "They've gone over the bridge! You'll get them if you hurry!"

A confused murmur followed his cry, and then the voice of the village constable came clearly:

"Is that Mr Hawke? Don't shoot, lads! We've got our man if he's on the track!"

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Figures doubled out of the mist masking for the white posts which marked the bridge. The detective pulled Tommy down at the head of the slope leading into the canal. Although they were only a few feet from the bridge, nothing of the structure could be seen.

Somebody shouted. It was a shout of terror mingled with despair. "Stop!" the unknown gasped. "Not that way! Back for your lives!" A man came stumbling over the uneven ground and turned with his back to the white posts.

He was of stocky build, and in his hands was a rifle. He held it above his head, waving it to halt the approaching squad. He shouted again, this time shrilly.

"The bridge has gone! It's a trap! It——"

Hawke's lean body uncoiled. He caught the man by the arms and twisted them savagely so that the rifle clattered to the ground. A light flared as the constable drew the shutter from his hull's eye.

"What's the matter with you, Burrows!" he asked. "The bridge is right there behind you! Have you gone daft!"

Burrows twisted in Hawke's grip. He stared at the plank footway across the canal dimly seen by the constable's lantern, and an incoherent mumbling came from his lips. He looked at the posts and then up into the face of his captor.

### Carther Gets An Explanation.

"WHAT made you think the bridge wasn't there?" demanded the criminologist.

"I—I fancied——"

"The markers were changed back, Burrows! Only my assistant and myself knew of the change. You thought that to walk between those posts would carry the man into the canal in the same way as Taylor went over!"

The man's manner changed. He

curled horribly and fought like a wild beast to free himself from the detective's grip. His bewildered comrades stood around helplessly, but the constable closed in to end the struggle.

"What's all this about!" he demanded. "What's he done, Mr Hawke?"

"Murder! Taylor's murder! Get your handcuffs on him, and then I'll show you the trap he set, the trap he thought you were walking into!"

\* \* \* \*

Half an hour later Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke were warming themselves at the study fire of Colonel Carther. The old soldier, also chief constable of the county, shook his head as he listened to his friend's story.

"The evidence is clear enough, Dixon. You made Burrows give himself away. He murdered Taylor, but he hadn't the courage to let the others fall into the canal. But I'm puzzled. Why did he fire at you and then run for the Home Guard?"

"He didn't know who I was. He hoped to make it appear I was responsible for the first moving of the posts. His plan had gone wrong because a stranger was near the canal, and that was his last desperate attempt to throw the blame on other shoulders."

"I see. What was the trouble between him and Taylor?"

"According to the constable they were at loggerheads over a piece of land. Taylor was going to law about it and was expected to win the case."

"Jove, yes! I heard something about that. But fancy planning murder for such a small thing!"

Hawke shrugged his shoulders. He looked at the flames flickering over the logs on the open hearth. There was a queer sadness in his eyes.

"The war changes people's outlooks," he said.

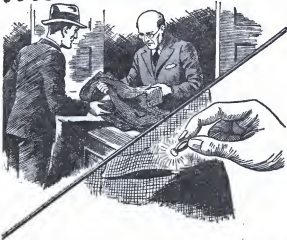
"Looks like being a nice, cheery week-end," grinned Tommy.

Hawke's face lightened once more at the prospect.



## THE CASE OF

# The Pawned Suit



**T**OMMY BURKE was looking out of a window of Dixon Hawke's Dover Street flat while Hawke spoke on the telephone.

Tommy frowned when he saw a child walking along the pavement, one hand at her eyes.

Even from that distance it was clear that she was crying. He saw a woman stop, speak to the girl, and then lead her across the road out of his view.

"That lady's a decent sort," he reflected, and then he stiffened, for there was a ring at the front door.

The landlady was out shopping, and so Tommy hurried downstairs, to discover the Good Samaritan and the crying child there.

"Good—good afternoon," he stammered. "W—what—"

"This kiddie has a note for a Mr Hawke at this address," said the woman with a quick smile. "Can you see that she gets to him? I really can't stop any longer."

She pressed something into the child's hand, patted her head of golden but untidy curls, and then hurried off, leaving Tommy face-to-face with the little girl.

She was trying to keep back her tears, but when she was left with Tommy she burst out crying again.

"Here, I say!" exclaimed Tommy urgently. "Here, this won't do! What did the kind lady give you?" He stretched out a hand to investigate, but

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a tiny fist tightened about a coin—he could see it was a penny—and then there followed a fresh burst of crying.

"Oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed Tommy desperately. "How on earth can I stop her! And she has a message for the gov'nor——"

Frowning, and quite at a loss, he stood by the open door. When he tried to take her hand, she cried more loudly, and he was at the limit of his composure when Hawke came hurrying down the stairs.

"Hallo, hallo!" he cried in a gay voice Tommy rarely heard. "I've lost a sixpence, a bright and shining sixpence—has anybody seen it?"

The girl, no more than six or seven, stopped crying all at once, stared at him, and then began to look about the hallway. Tommy gulped.

Hawke slid a hand from his pocket, and Tommy saw a sixpence slip to the carpet, and then roll near his own foot. The child soon saw it there and darted towards it.

Tommy stepped hastily away, and the child lifted the coin to Hawke, saying very clearly for such a youngster:

"That man tried to hide it!"

"Well, did he now?" said Hawke. "We'll have to teach him better than that, won't we?" He winked at Tommy, who had turned a beetroot red, and went on. "I wonder why you wanted to come here, Mary?"

"My name isn't Mary, it's Bessie," said the child confidently. "My mummy told me to bring a letter."

She made the statement with evident pride, and then, turning her back on Tommy, lifted her tiny skirt and from a pocket in it produced an envelope. "For a gentleman called Hawke. Do you know him?"

"Well, if that isn't the strangest thing!" exclaimed Hawke. "My name's Hawke, and the letter is addressed to me! How would you like to keep that sixpence for bringing it to me!"

"Ta!" said the child, and then sharply, "That man tried to hide it!"

Hawke concealed a smile and said to Tommy:

"Slip along to the landlady, old son—she's with some friends at 101a, I think—and ask her to come back. This infant might want looking after for a little while. Come on, Bessie—let's go to my room, shall we?"

### The Wife's Story.

WHEN Tommy returned with the landlady, Hawke was sitting in his chair, Bessie on the top of his desk, and together they were singing "Humpty Dumpty."

The child's spirits were quite recovered, and she even treated Tommy to a smile, and went willingly enough with the landlady, clutching both sixpence and penny.

"Well, I'm bothered!" exclaimed Tommy. "You handled her without any trouble."

"Now then!" protested Hawke and, although he was smiling, Tommy saw that there was seriousness in his grey eyes. "I just used commonsense, old son, and got her mind off the problem, which was probably that of the difficulty of finding me. However, there's a more urgent problem on hand; read that."

He handed a letter to Tommy, one which was illiterate and written in pencil. He had some difficulty in deciphering it, but finally read:

Dear Mister Hawke, My Sam alwis said you was a good sort, you saved him from jug once. Naow the cops 'ave took 'im, but he knows the cops. My address is 89 Littlejohn Mansions, Paddington. Good you please come, as I am laid up with a bad ankle. Mrs Benn.

P.S.—If you can't come wood you mind secin' my Bessie gits back safe.

Tommy was frowning, while Hawke ran through the files he kept in the office. He took one out, and it contained a photograph of a genial-looking

# The Pawned Suit

man, together with some particulars. Hawke read them aloud for Tommy's benefit.

Sam Benn, married, aged 49, bricklayer. Suspected by police of burglary. Cleared of suspicion in Simonson burglary case. Once a doubtful character, but now quite reliable, especially since his marriage.

"I remember the case," Hawke added as he put the folder back and then reached for his hat. "He was working on some new building at Simonson's, the jewellers, when there was a big robbery. The police thought they had him, but I proved he was nowhere near at the time. All the same, the police didn't catch the real thief, and I was busy on some other work at the time. That's odd, odd son. Get your hat and we'll go to see Mrs Benn. We'll leave the kiddie here till we see what's what."

Littlejohn Mansions proved to be a great tenement building in one of the poorer districts of London. Hawke's big car attracted considerable attention, especially after he locked it, and, with Tommy, disappeared into the building.

It took them some time to locate Number 89, but when they did they were admitted by a child even younger than Bessie.

Tommy and Hawke went through, to see a middle-aged, weary-looking woman sitting on an old couch. She was preparing some vegetables at a chair by her side.

At sight of Hawke her eyes brightened, and she hastily dropped the knife and wiped her hands on her apron. That was clean; so was the rest of the flat, although there was ample evidence of lack of money.

"Why, bless me soul, you've come! Sam never misjudged a man, never! 'E'll come,' 'e said, 'when 'e knows I'm in trouble that's none've my makin'.' Where's Bessie, Mister 'Awke? She's out right, ain't she?"

Hawke reassured her and then asked: "Just what is the trouble, Mrs Benn?"

"It's them nosy cops," said the woman sharply. "They never reely give 'im up, they never, an' now——"

She did not tell her story well, but Hawke unravelled it after twenty minutes or so. And it was a continuation of the two-year-old burglary.

A piece of stolen jewellery had been recovered, from a pawn-shop, and Sam Benn had pawned it—or at least, it had been in the pockets of a coat which he had pawned.

Hawke gathered that Benn and his wife had run into bad times, chiefly because the bricklayer had met with an accident, and been laid up for several months. Reduced to pawning the suit, the next thing they had known, Sam had been arrested at the flat.

"An' I know 'e never took it," insisted Mrs Benn. "'E would 'ave told me; 'e ain't lied to me, not in all the years we bin married. It stands ter reason, anyways, 'e wouldn't 'ave that in 'is suit fer two years, would 'e? Not 'im! I brushed it too often for that, Mister 'Awke! That wasn't in 'is pocket when 'e left the flat, that's a fact!"

## Mr Miller's Evidence.

HAWKE gleaned all the information he could, and then left, after reassuring the woman that he would do everything possible. He had also learned the names of the pawnbroker and the police inspector handling the case.

"It looks pretty clear, guv'nor," said Tommy as Hawke drove away, still watched by curious flat-dwellers. "Naturally Benn's wife would lie for her husband, but——"

Hawke said quietly: "Two years ago I satisfied myself, and the police, that Benn knew nothing about the burglary. I've heard nothing to suggest that I was wrong, yet. We'll see what Miller, the pawnbroker, has to say."

Miller was a short, fat man, wearing a green baize apron around his waist

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middle. He recognised Hawke and lifted his hands.

"Well, well! An unexpected pleasure. Come in, Mr Hawke, come in! Don't tell me you've come to put a gold watch in my charge! Business can't be as bad as all that, can it?"

Hawke chuckled.

"No, Miller. I want some information. Did you find the jewellery in the pocket of a suit left by Samuel Benn?"

Miller's smile disappeared.

"Yes, that's the case, Mr Hawke, and sorry I was. I found it myself, a diamond ring worth all of a hundred pounds. I always go through the pockets of suits left in pawn. I've had stolen stuff hidden away like that before, and I don't need teaching a lesson twice. When I saw it, I compared it with the police list, and there it was, described to a T. So I took it round to Mr Blair at once, believe me. But I'd always thought Benn was a reformed character. You never can tell with these men, can you?"

Hawke did not commit himself.

"Did you examine the clothes at the time they were handed in?" he demanded.

"Oh, no. After closing-time, I did that. One o' my assistants lent Benn seven-and-six on the suit."

"Had it been in before?"

"Bless you, yes! They've met with bad times, the Benns. Between you and me, Mr Hawke, it wasn't worth half-a-crown, that suit—the police have it now—but I like to help a man who's down, when I can."

"A very charitable thought," smiled Hawke. "I wish more pawnbrokers were like that, Miller! Which of your assistants took the suit in?"

"Willy—he's up in the store-room—would you like to see him?"

Hawke said: "Yes," and the assistant came down. He was an oddish man, with thick-lensed glasses. Yes, he remembered the day Benn had brought the suit in very well—he had good reason to, for he had broken his glasses

just after, and he was dreadfully short-sighted without them.

He remembered that day all right, for the new lens had cost him fifteen shillings! It was the previous Monday, the usual day for suits to come in.

Yes, he knew Benn very well, recognised him at once, and he hadn't troubled to look in the pockets. He wished he had, after what Mr Miller had found.

### The Angry Jeweller.

HAWKE thanked the assistant and Miller, and then went outside. Tommy was frowning as he said:

"There isn't much doubt, guv'nor. And Miller's a good sort, we know. He wouldn't try to put anything across Benn."

"I don't think so," acknowledged Hawke, "but we'll take nothing for granted. And there's one pointer I don't think you have seen, or the police."

He would say nothing farther, but drove to Scotland Yard. He was taken at once to Inspector Blair's office, and was surprised to see a tall, well-dressed man already there. Blair smiled a little grimly.

"Well, Hawke, I'm very glad to see you! This is where you come unstuck. I wonder whether you've gone wrong in other cases, but convinced us you're right!" he added a little maliciously. "By the way, this is Mr Simonson. He's identified the ring as being one stolen from his safe when Benn was working on the building."

"We're old acquaintances, of course," said Hawke, and returned the jeweller's distant bow. "But I'm rather puzzled, Blair. Why was this ring on the list of stolen property circulated to pawnbrokers? It's usually taken off after six months, isn't it?"

Blair looked at Simonson, who said coldly:

# The Pawned Suit

"In this case I insisted on it being kept on, Mr Hawke. I lost over five thousand pounds worth of jewels, and the insurance was too low to cover it altogether. Like the law, but apparently unlike yourself, I have a long memory."

Hawke smiled at the thrust, although Tommy's blood boiled.

"We're all liable to make mistakes, Mr Simonson, but we shouldn't take anything for granted. Has any of the other stuff turned up?" he demanded of Blair.

"Not yet. Benn won't talk, but I think he will when he realises that if he doesn't tell us who was with him on the job, he'll get a long sentence. If he talks we'll make it as easy for him as we can."

Hawke pursed his lips.

"That sounds generous of you, Inspector, but it assumes Benn guilty. I proved to your satisfaction that he could not have taken any part in the burglary, and even though you have changed your mind, I haven't."

"Such an attitude is ridiculous!" snapped Simonson.

Hawke shrugged. "I'm afraid it's evident we won't agree, sir. I'd like to see Benn later, Inspector, if I may."

Blair agreed, although not very graciously, and Hawke and Tommy left.

Tommy burst out as soon as they were in Parliament Street:

"I'd like to paste that Simonson! The slimy beast!"

"Steady!" cautioned Hawke. "We're all entitled to our opinions, and Simonson merely has a rather annoying way of putting his. Now, old son, I've a job for you. Go along to Simonson's, and make discreet inquiries. I rather fancy the insurance company has worried the jeweller, hinting that they're not even now satisfied that it wasn't an insurance swindle. See what you can find, will you? It should be a good job," he added smilingly. "Most

of the assistants will be young ladies now because of the war!"

## Tommy Attacked.

HAWKE, however, was only partly right. Three oddish men, two girls, and a middle-aged man were 'at the jeweller's. The last's name was Brant, and Tommy remembered him. Recognition was mutual, and Tommy wished he had prepared a better story than he had.

Brant vouchsafed little information, and showed quite clearly that he was not interested in Tommy's inquiries. Tommy, of course, had not been able to approach the subject directly, and felt miserable that he had failed altogether in his task.

He decided to wait about in the hope that Brant would go out, and he could tackle one of the others. He waited in the little side street off Piccadilly for nearly an hour. Then he drew a sharp breath, for Willy, the pawnbroker's assistant, had just entered the shop! After some ten minutes Willy and Brant left together.

Tommy gave up the idea of further inquiries, and followed the two men. They went by bus to Aldgate, then turned off into the Petticoat Lane area.

The streets were almost deserted, and the two men made a good pace. Tommy hurried to catch them at a corner, and as he turned it he came across a man standing close to the wall.

"You little skunk!" muttered the man.

Tommy had no time to see him clearly, for a kick to the stomach doubled him up. He staggered back, and then the man came at him again. Tommy fought desperately, the more so when he saw that his assailant was wearing a knuckle-duster. If once that vicious weapon caught him right, it would do terrible damage.

Tommy fought like a madman, but his assailant was tough, and had

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weakened the youngster by that first kick. Tommy prayed that someone would come by, longed for a policeman—and then he heard a shout, and the man turned away from him, tearing down the street as fast as he could go.

Tommy turned—and looked into the anxious face of his chief.

"Guv'nor!" he gasped. "Thank heaven—you—arrived!"

"Thanks be that you fought him off," said Hawke grimly. "I made you take too big a risk, old son. You're all right!"

"When I've—got my—breath back—I will be!"

"Good man," said Hawke. "Rest here, and as soon as you can move, go to the nearest telephone and ask Blair to send several men to 17 Lapp Street, where Willy lives. Tell him it's urgent."

### Brant Confesses.

L APP Street was only five minutes' walk away, and fifteen minutes after Hawke reached it he saw Brant, the man Tommy had met at the jeweller's, coming away from the house. Hawke approached him and Brant snapped: "Get out of my way!"

"I didn't know I was in your way," retorted Hawke. "Where are you going, Brant? Oughtn't you to be at work?"

"Never mind what I ought——"

He stopped abruptly, for from the end of the street came two uniformed policemen. He turned, but from the other end came two more, with Inspector Blair: Tommy had lost no time, nor had the police.

Brant flung himself at Hawke, but the latter was ready, sending him staggering with a right to the chin. A few minutes later Brant was searched—and several other pieces of the stolen jewellery were discovered.

Moreover, other pieces were in Willy's house.

The pawnbroker's assistant and Brant were taken into custody. Then Brant admitted the original theft. That had been easy, but disposing of the stolen goods had been more difficult, owing to Simonson's insistence on a constant watch being kept for them.

"That explains what followed," said Dixon Hawke quietly. "You thought that if a 'thief' were found, it would be assumed that he had disposed of the goods, and the watch would be relaxed. So you thought of getting Sam Benn accused again.

"You found that he was often pawning his clothes, and made an arrangement with Willy, who was only too glad to help, on a commission basis. The ring, one which would be immediately identified, was planted in Benn's suit, since you knew that Miller always went through the pockets, and that he would take the ring straight to the police. That was the scheme, Brant, wasn't it?"

Brant glared at him.

"Yes, blast you, it was! And if it hadn't been for you, it would have come off! When Willy phoned me that you were interfering, I got worried. Then when your nosy assistant came snooping around, I thought I'd better get rid of the stuff. I phoned for a man to wait for him and put him out. I wish he'd succeeded!"

"You'll have plenty more time for wishing in jail," said Hawke coldly.

"If Burke hadn't followed me, you'd have got nowhere!"

"That's not true," said Dixon Hawke. "I suspected Willy from the start. So I followed him, and when he came to see you, I found out his address and was hurrying to it."

"That's a grand piece of work, guv'nor," Tommy said as they left soon afterwards. "The Bens will hero-worship you all right now!"

Hawke chuckled. "I think I'll give you the privilege of taking Mrs Benn the glad tidings, old son—and you can escort Bessie home at the same time!"

# THE CASE OF *The Drum of Doom*



"MR HAWKE, I expect you will decide that I ought to see a mental specialist—but I have come to you because I'm afraid of something I don't know about!"

The girl who sat in the big leather chair leaned forward, bringing her two hands together and gripping them tightly. Her sensitive mouth quivered and the pupils of her eyes were dilated.

"A nameless fear," she repeated, "which is driving my father insane!"

Dixon Hawke, who had been walking slowly up and down the room, paused by the chair and put his hand on the girl's shoulder. There was a kindly expression on his stern face.

"You must be more explicit, Miss Sanger," he said. "What is the nature of this fear?"

"A sort of brooding," Mary Sanger whispered. "You know what it feels like when a thunderstorm threatens but doesn't break? Well, it's like that, only much, much worse."

"And I am to understand you only feel it at your house?"

"Only at the house. Once away from the place everything is all right."

"There have been no actual manifestations?"

The girl hesitated. Then she lifted her big eyes to meet the keen stare of the detective.

"A strange thing happened about a week ago," she said. "I had a dog—a Scottie. It went mad and we had to have it destroyed. Jock, that was what

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we called it, was in perfect health, Mr Hawke, and there was no excessive heat to drive it mad. The veterinary was puzzled and couldn't explain it. I can, Mr Hawke! That brooding fear which hangs over the house drove Jack insane!"

The detective was startled. For a moment he wondered if his client was in complete possession of her senses, but when he looked again at the sensitive mouth and intelligent eyes he put the thought out of his mind. Sitting down opposite the girl, he began a series of questions.

"You say that you are afraid for your father. Has he changed recently?"

"He's changed terribly, Mr Hawke. Daddy was a very happy man and very vigorous, although he's over sixty. Now he's morose and looks more than his age. He's simply breaking up, and stays in the house all day with his horrid collection."

"Ah, so Mr Sanger is a collector?"

"Yes, of instruments of torture, Mr Hawke!"

### The Torquemada Relics.

THE detective was startled. Then he gave a low exclamation, and reached for a copy of an illustrated weekly which lay on a table near him. He turned over the pages.

"I thought I remembered an article on the subject," he said. "Your father possesses the Torquemada Collection of Inquisition relics. I see by these photographs that he has two rooms of his house set apart as a museum."

"And practically lives in them—now," the girl said. "Oh, Mr Hawke, I don't know why he bought that awful collection. He doesn't know anything about the Inquisition, or those dreadful instruments which they used to kill people. It was just a whim on his part."

"Your father made a fortune out of wool, didn't he, Miss Sanger?"

"Yes, he's nearly a millionaire."

Hawke was silent for a moment.

"Have you had this feeling of fear since the collection came to the house?" he asked.

"No—yet I am sure it has something to do with those dreadful things, Mr Hawke. They make me shudder every time I look at them, and think of the people who have died in them, racked with pain! The blood which has caused the ironwork of some of the things to rust! Oh, they're wicked, wicked!"

The detective jumped to his feet briskly.

"Could you invite me and my assistant down to the house?"

"I want to, Mr Hawke. I can say that you're old friends of mine. Daddy's so strange these days that he wouldn't realise he'd never seen you before."

"We will be down this evening, Miss Sanger. In the meantime I advise you to try and get your father away from his collection, and lock the doors!"

"You think——" the girl began.

"That your fears for his reason are not without grounds!" Dixon Hawke said quietly.

### The Frightened Kitten.

THE Sanger home was at Pangbourne, where the Thames is perhaps most beautiful. The house looked out over the river and green lawns came down to the water's edge. An avenue of chestnut trees formed the approach.

A big grey car moved slowly up the drive, and Tommy Burke at the wheel smiled as he looked around.

"Sanger has certainly spent his fortune well, chief," he said. "A pity he had to mess round with such a weird hobby. The Torquemada Collection—who was Torquemada?"

"You'd better go back to school," Hawke said. "Torquemada was the Spanish monk responsible for most of



# The Drum Of Doom

the tortures practised by the Inquisition."

Tommy Burke grimaced.

"I suppose he was a maniac, like most of the Inquisitors!" he said. "I hope it isn't his ghost which is roaming round here scaring people. Hullo!"

He clapped on the brakes and swung the car to one side as something black flashed across their path. It was a kitten, a mass of bristling fur. Flashing up a tree, it crouched on one of the branches. A low moaning came from the animal.

Just as Hawke and his assistant got out of the car to investigate this little scene, Miss Sanger appeared, running down the drive. She gave a glad cry at the sight of the them.

"You've come!" she said. "I'm so glad. Did you see my kitten?"

"It's up the tree. What frightened it?"

The girl shook her head, and the old look of fear showed in her eyes.

"I don't know," she said. "It was given to me by somebody in the village. I only brought it into the house a few minutes ago, and now it rushed out like a mad thing. Something terrible must be going to happen! I can feel it, and so can the servants. They've all given notice!"

Hawke made no comment, but ordered Tommy to drive on to the house. A butler received them at the door. His hands trembled slightly as he took their hats and coats, and Hawke saw him look quickly over his shoulder.

The house, although very old, was light and airy, and reflected by its furniture and cheerful paintings the normal happy characters of the Sangers. It was the last place to associate with such a weird mystery as the one Hawke had come to investigate.

Before he had taken many paces down the great hall, however, a most peculiar feeling came to him.

It was like an invisible band closing around his head. A curious ringing echoed in his ears, and he felt every nerve in his body become tense. Hawke

could not throw off the feeling. It suggested an evil, and unseen power.

When he looked at Tommy he saw that the young fellow was affected in the same way. He was looking around with frank alarm.

"Do you feel it?" Miss Sanger asked, her voice almost a whisper.

"Feel it!" Tommy gasped. "I'll say I do!"

He stopped abruptly as the sound of a distant laugh came from the upper part of the house. Again and again it rang out, and although it was not forced there was no humour in it.

"Daddy!" the girl said. "He's up in the museum. What can be making him laugh!"

## The Insane Laughter.

SHE hurried up the broad stairs, with Hawke and his assistant close on her heels. Crossing a corridor, they reached a door which was partly open. The laughter came from the room beyond.

"Daddy!" Miss Sanger called. "What's the matter?"

She pushed wide the door. There were a few chairs and a writing-desk in the room. Around the walls were arranged the strange pieces of machinery which formed the Torquemada collection. Many and varied were those cunning contrivances for racking the human body.

At the back of the room was something which looked like a huge paper press. The lower platform, however, was hollowed to take a human body. There were leather bands to hold the victim in place.

The movable part of the press was studded with short spikes, and it did not need much imagination to understand the purpose of the horrible machine. As a handle was turned, the upper platform would close down on the prisoner, slowly crushing him and driving the spikes into every part of his body.

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Before this apparatus stood a stocky man, rosy of cheek and grey-haired; a typical North Country business man. A peal of laughter came from him as Miss Sanger hurried across the room.

"Well, Mary, my dear!" he said, "Shall we put you in the press? Ha! Ha! Ha! What a thing to do to people! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

At the touch of his daughter's hand Mr Sanger gave a strong shudder, and his unnatural laughter stopped. He turned and bowed to the visitors.

"Friends of Mary's, eh?" he said. "You're very welcome. She needs cheering up. Has some foolish idea in her head that there's a spook loose in the house."

He caught Hawke by the arm, and a wild look came into his eyes.

"She's not far wrong!" he growled. "I've heard them shrieking sometimes—did you hear that! It came from the Iron Maiden!"

He jumped to a contrivance roughly shaped like a human form. At the touch of his finger the iron body opened. Inside was a hollow lined with spikes, into which the victim was thrust. The embrace of that hideous machine became a terrible and lingering death.

It was a popular form of torture in the Middle Ages, and Hawke had seen specimens before, although none which had been in such good condition as this one. With troubled eyes he watched the man peer inside.

"I heard nothing," the detective said. "You must have been mistaken, Mr Sanger."

To distract the man's attention, he asked questions concerning some of the other apparatus. Mr Sanger began to show him round, and before they had gone very far Hawke was sure of one thing—that the old fellow was fast losing his reason, as his daughter had feared.

They looked at a rack; at an iron boot which could crush the bones of the foot to a pulp. They saw a garrotte, used for slowly strangling a victim; an iron jacket which could squeeze a man's

body and give him frightful internal injuries.

It was amazing to think that the human mind could have devised such machines, and that a man so cruel as Torquemada could have lived to make use of them.

### The Face At The Window.

AS Tommy and Hawke walked round they were conscious that the feeling of fear was creeping over them. It was not fear of the horrible machines about them. It was something nameless.

Mr Sanger passed into the next room. It contained the overflow of the collection. Amongst other objects, Hawke noticed a giant, carved cylinder of wood which must have been six feet in length. The ends were capped with parchment.

"A drum!" he asked.

Mr Sanger nodded. He was very distracted, and continually looked this way and that, as if he had expected to see somebody in the room.

"The Drum of Doom," he said briefly. "The agents of the Inquisitors used to heat it while a victim was tortured. Think of a man in that press of mine seeing the spikes coming down to pierce him, hearing the steady thunder of that drum!"

He laughed softly and mopped his forehead, which was streaming with perspiration.

"A bean of Mary's gave me that drum," he said, more sanely now.

Mary Sanger tilted her round little chin.

"Roderick Doyle is no bean of mine, daddy," she protested. "I don't like him, and he's too old!"

"I wouldn't let you marry him if you wanted to!" her father smiled. "There's too much Spanish blood in him for my liking. He's probably a descendant of Torquemada!"

"Surely the name isn't Spanish!" Hawke mused.

## The Drum Of Doom

"His mother was Spanish," Mr Sanger explained. "An interesting man. He knows a lot about my collection, and I'm grateful to him for the drum. Ah, but the fire is getting low. I must put some more charcoal into it."

Near the drum was a brass pan in which charcoal was smouldering. The day was warm, and Hawke was puzzled.

"Doyle told me to keep a hrazier burning for a while near the drum,"

came from him, and he pointed with trembling hand to the window.

"A face!" he screeched. "A man with a cowl over his head!"

Mr Sanger swayed and pitched forward. Hawke caught him before he could fall to the floor. Glancing over his shoulder at the window, he saw nothing except the bough of a tree which was swaying in the wind.

"There's nothing there——" Hawke began soothingly.



Hawke climbed through the hole he had made in the door and raced across the room.

Mr Sanger explained. "He brought it over from Spain recently, and was afraid the sea air had injured it. The heat will draw the dampness out of it."

He led the guests to the outer room again, and on the way he once more paused to stare at the torture press. The machine seemed to have a fearful fascination for him.

Suddenly the man straightened and jerked his head round. A choking cry

He stopped. From the other room a strange booming sound had come.

Somebody was beating the Drum of Doom.

It took Mr Hawke less than a minute to lower the senseless man into a chair and dart into the other room. By that time, however, the booming of the drum had stopped, although the echoes of it still rang through the house.

An unaccustomed feeling of fear came to the criminologist as he stood in the

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doorway. It needed only a glance to see that the room was empty. The window was closed and bolted. How could anyone have entered and beaten the drum?

"Absurd!" Hawke muttered.

He touched the parchment head of the drum with his hand. There was a faint throbbing. The drum was still quivering from the beat of the invisible sticks.

### Hawke Takes Charge.

AS the detective stood there, more bewildered than he had ever been in his career, he heard a strange voice from the other room. Swinging round he saw that a tall and handsome man had just entered.

One look at the high cheek-bones, dark eyes, and slightly sallow complexion convinced him that the newcomer was none other than Roderick Doyle. There was certainly a lot of Spanish blood in the man.

Mary Sanger had rushed to him, and he had put an arm around her comfortingly. His dark eyes glittered as he looked down at her fair hair.

"I have come at the right time, eh?" he asked gently. "What has happened to your father? Who was beating the drum?"

"Father thought he saw a face at the window!" the girl whispered. "He fell down in a fit. Then the drum started—"

"Mr Doyle," Hawke broke in curtly, "where were you exactly when that drum began to beat?"

The man frowned and his thin face became suddenly savage. He threw a questioning glance towards the distressed girl. Mary Sanger whispered an introduction, and Doyle's manner changed.

"I was in the hall," he said, "talking to the butler. You can ask him if you don't believe me. It was impossible for me to have slipped through this room unseen, and have beaten that drum, if that's what you think."

"If I understand the story correctly, the drum was used to hide the cries of Torquemada's victims," Hawke murmured.

"You are right. The beating of the drum was a sign that somebody was being tortured. Hadn't we better get out of this room? It isn't nice here, and Mr Sanger looks as if he needs attention."

Doyle hesitated, and then went on with a sudden rush of words.

"Forgive me, Mary, if I say something terrible. I think a mental specialist should be called. Your father has been acting queerly for some time, and now that he thinks he saw a monk at the window, the matter is serious. I'll telephone for a specialist from London if you like."

"It is not necessary," Hawke broke in.

"Sir, I am better acquainted with Mr Sanger than you, and I know the feeling of fear which he says hangs over this house is a figment of his imagination," declared Doyle loudly.

"It is not his imagination," the detective said sternly. "There is something, and I intend to find out what it is!"

He made a sign to Tommy, and between them they picked up the limp body of Mr Sanger and carried it out of the room. The girl showed the way to her father's bedroom, which was on the other side of the corridor.

"A very bad shock," Hawke said, "but not fatal. It is best that he be left to recover from his fit naturally."

Hawke went out into the passage. Roderick Doyle had taken Miss Sanger into the hall below, and his soft voice could be heard as he comforted the girl. The criminologist went down to join the pair after giving his assistant orders to watch over the senseless man.

Doyle stiffened slightly at the sight of the Dover Street man. Apparently he had resented the way in which he had been stopped from calling a specialist.

## The Drum Of Doom

"I understand that you presented the drum to Mr Sanger?" Hawke asked.

"I did. I thought it would complete his collection."

"The Drum of Doom!" Hawke repeated when he was alone once more. "A strange name. I wish I could remember more about the methods of the Inquisitors."

Hawke spoke half to himself, and began to walk up and down the hall with his hands clasped behind him. It was beginning to get very dark outside. The queer, brooding feeling of disaster which hung over the house was increasing.

"Jove!" he gasped at last. "The Drum of Doom was——"

His words were lost in a terrific uproar which broke out above. Tommy Burke's voice rang out in a startled cry. Then there was a peal of laughter and the sound of something heavy crashing to the floor. Feet pattered across the corridor and a door slammed.

Hawke, bounding up the stairs two at a time, saw that the door of Mr Sanger's bedroom was open. Across the threshold Tommy was sprawled.

He sat up as his master ran to him, and gingerly touched his head.

"What happened!" Hawke demanded.

He noticed a golf club on the floor near his assistant.

"Sanger—he came rushing out of his room like a madman, chief. Hit me with that club. I couldn't stop him and he's locked himself up in the museum."

As Tommy spoke, a mad laugh came from behind the locked door. A moment later the dull throbbing of the great drum rang through the house. Sanger's voice broke out in a babble of words.

"The drum—the drum! They're beating for me! I'm going to be tortured. The press!"

"Come out of there, Sanger!" roared Hawke.

He ran at the door, but it was too stout to be brought down by his shoulder. Hawke rushed down the

corridor and picked up a chair. Using it as a club he drove in one of the panels of the door.

What he saw through the gap made him cry out with horror. Sanger had placed himself in position in the press. He had touched a lever which caused a series of weights to move and press down the top platform of the apparatus.

Hawke climbed through the hole he had made in the door; raced across the room. It took him only a moment to stop the machine, and drag the crazy man from under the spikes. Sanger was limp in his arms.

"Fainted again!" Hawke said curtly.

### The Invisible Drummer.

HAWKE saw Mary Sanger rush into the room, followed by Roderick Doyle.

"Don't worry about your father," he said kindly. "I am sure that he will recover his reason. I know now what drove him into this state of temporary insanity. The drum!"

"The Drum of Doom!"

"The cleverest invention of Torquemada!" Hawke said.

"You're talking rubbish," Roderick Doyle snapped. "How can the drum have upset Mary's father?"

Hawke shot out a long arm and his powerful fingers caught the man by the wrist. He led him, protesting, into the inner room, and pointed to the great drum.

"It was nearly five minutes ago when we heard this beat," he said, "yet the parchment head nearest the fire is still quivering. In fact, Mr Roderick Doyle, as you well know, the drum is still beating although we cannot hear it!"

"Let me go!" gasped Doyle. "You're as crazy as Sanger. The drum beating although we can't hear it! What do you mean!"

"It is a scientific fact," the detective said quietly, "that sound can be produced at such a high pitch that the human ear is not tuned to receive

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

It. The nervous system of the body, however, reacts to such a note if it continues steadily. That drum is beating steadily at this moment, Mr Doyle.

"The charcoal fire—which you told your victim to keep burning near it because the drum was damp—is what causes the parchment covers to vibrate. The nerves of everybody in this house feel that steady beat. Mary Sanger's dog heard the beat, and was driven crazy by the monotonous noise. Her kitten, too, heard it. Animals' ears can pick up a higher note than we humans."

He paused, but the grip on Doyle's arm did not slacken.

"Torquemada's instrument is well named the Drum of Doom. The strongest nerves must break down under the vibrations of that steady beating. You knew the truth about the drum, as I said before, Mr Doyle!"

Hawke looked over his shoulder at Mary Sanger, who stood in the doorway staring at him incredulously. The girl came slowly forward.

"You are accusing him of trying to drive father insane!"

"I am!" was the stern reply. "Roderick Doyle was determined to marry you. You had refused him and your father did not approve of his persistence. He presented the drum to your father—knowing that it would drive a sensitive man insane, and surely to his death, as, indeed, it would have done if I hadn't broken the door down in time. Your nerves would also have been shattered through time, Miss Sanger, and you would have been grateful for this rascal's protection. If his plan had succeeded, he would have won you and your father's fortune!"

He swung Doyle round to face him. Guilt was plainly stamped on the man's lean face. He shivered as Hawke looked at him.

"I am not sure if you couldn't be tried for attempted murder," the detective mused. "I think, however, that Mr Sanger and his daughter would not

like this matter to be made public. However, you shall not escape punishment. If I remember rightly there is a horsewhip in the hall, and——"

With a shrill cry of fear, Doyle wrenched himself free and rushed from the room. They heard his feet clattering on the stairs and then the slam of the front door.

Hawke laughed quietly.

"The last we will see of him," he said. "Have you a knife, Tommy! Good—now I'll put an end to this fear which hangs over the house."

He slit the parchment skins of the great drum. It immediately seemed as if a great silence had closed down. Nerves became calm and the sensation of brooding danger passed away. Miss Sanger gave a gasp of relief as she looked at her father who was lying on a sofa.

"His old expression is coming back, Mr Hawke! He is himself again!"

"Yes, he will be perfectly well shortly," the criminologist smiled. "Persuade him to get rid of this hideous collection. These instruments of torture should be destroyed—as I have destroyed the Drum of Doom."

The girl looked at him.

"Everything is very clear now, Mr Hawke," she said. "I suppose the face daddy saw at the window was a vision of his own imagination."

"Exactly. Probably caused by the branch swaying outside."

"And the drumming we heard? What caused that?" Tommy Burke asked.

"It happened when the fire was re-kindled with the fresh fuel. Sudden heat caused a vibration so powerful that we were able to hear it."

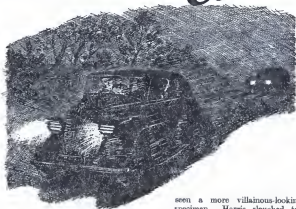
"You have solved everything, Mr Hawke," Mary Sanger said.

"Except one thing, young lady!"

"And that is?"

"Why such a monster as Torquemada could ever have lived on earth!" the detective said harshly. "Ah, but was man ever crueller or more barbaric than during the days of the Inquisition?"

# THE CASE OF *The Pursuing Car*



**T**OMMY BURKE walked slowly along the narrow back street of the provincial town.

He was dressed in an old suit, and wore a choker and cap—he looked, in fact, a pretty tough proposition, and few would have recognized him as the usually spruce young assistant of Dixon Hawke.

Hawke was in the town on a case, and, after two days of patient investigation, had discovered that one of the people probably involved lived in Cross Street.

Tommy was keeping a watch for the man, and suddenly he became alert as he saw the door of the house he was watching swing open and his quarry come out.

Bart Harris was tall and very thin and had a hare-lip. Tommy had rarely

seen a more villainous-looking specimen. Harris slouched towards the end of the street.

Tommy followed, kicking idly at a stone. He saw his man turn into another thoroughfare which led to one of the main streets of the town, but, as Tommy turned the corner, he stopped with an exclamation, for two men were standing there, hefty, ugly-looking customers.

"Nah, me young cock-o-lorum," said one. "What's your little game?"

Tommy drew a deep breath. His heart was beating fast, for there seemed little doubt that the men had been waiting for him.

Moreover he could now see Bart Harris standing fifty yards along the road, and looking back with an expression of gloating satisfaction.

"Lost yer tongue?" snapped the second man as Tommy kept quiet.

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"I don't never do that, chum," said Tommy. "I'm keepin' my eye on a certain feller, see."

"We don't need tellin' that," said the first man. His fists were clenched, his whole manner was threatening. "Listen, kiddo—if yer want ter keep a whole skin, clear out, an' don't show yer nose inside Cross Street agine."

Tommy, who had Hawke's instructions drumming in his mind, wondered desperately whether he could possibly succeed in doing what Hawke wanted. That was to get himself in favour with the crooks—a gang which had been operating for some time, never committing big crimes, but carrying out minor jobs on a wide scale.

### The Man With The Hare-Lip.

THE local police had asked for Hawke's help, and Hawke had discovered that Bart Harris employed one of the drivers of the cars which carried away the proceeds of the robberies.

The police had wanted to make an arrest at once, but Hawke had dissuaded them. Harris might not talk, and in any case might not know the real organisers of the crimes.

"I don't see that I should take any notice of you," Tommy muttered, appearing scared and yet defiant. "When a bloke does me a bad turn, I gits me own back, see!"

The first man looked startled.

"What you talkin' abart! Who're you watchin'?"

Tommy felt that his opening words had been well received, and grew more confident.

"I did a job for Harris once," he said gruffly. "Harris was goin' to pay me five quid, but he stalled me off with two. I'm goin' to git the other three quid somehow."

"Oh, you are, are you?"

"Yes, I am!" snapped Tommy with spirit. "I did it all in the dark, see, an'

never seen him proper, only I knew he had a hare-lip. So I covered the town for hare-lips and struck Harris. I reckon he's the guy I want."

A bellow of rough laughter greeted his tale, and the hefty man turned and beckoned to Harris, who came slouching up. Tommy's heart raced as the man with the hare-lip stared at him.

"Ever seen this kiddo before?" demanded the first speaker.

"Nope," said Harris clearly—his lip was not bad enough to affect his speech.

"'E reckons you double-crossed him, give him two quid instead've five for a job 'e done."

"Then he's a lying young squirt," said Harris, but he listened to Tommy's explanation.

Tommy then began to look very scared, as if realising that he had made a mistake, and was afraid of the consequences. When he was halfway through his apologetic explanations, Harris cut him short.

"Stow it, kid. But remember—Bart Harris always pays what he promises, no more, no less. How are you fixed for cash?"

Tommy licked his lips slowly.

"I could use some."

"Okay. Be at the corner of Cross Street and Bell Road to-night, half an hour before black-out time. Got that? You drive a car, I reckon!"

"'Course I do," said Tommy.

"Okay, be there," said Harris.

He walked off. It was clear that the other two regarded him as a leader, and whatever he said went. There was an exchange of loud jeets at the "mistake," before Tommy went on his way.

Tommy was bursting to tell Hawke of the success of the ruse, but he realised that he had to be careful.

He was in the High Street of the town when he grew aware that Harris was following him. He knew that, had he gone into a telephone kiosk then, his efforts would have been wasted. Instead, he slouched along, much as Harris did, and eventually reached a



# The Pursuing Car

small house on the other side of the High Street.

It was a lodging-house, none too clean, he knew, for he had spent the previous night there.

He went up to his room, leaving the door ajar. He heard the street door open, and then a murmur of voices, the words just audible. Harris was asking the keeper of the lodging-house whether he knew Tommy well. The man answered "No." Tommy held his breath and then Harris said sharply:

"Have him tailed, see. Let me know if he goes any place that is queer, or uses the phone."

"Okay," said the lodging-house keeper.

Tommy sat on the edge of his bed, thinking furiously. He was pretty sure that a big job was to be pulled that night, and he was to play a part in it.

Doubtless the organisation was short of car drivers, hence the question as to whether he could drive. But those things paled into insignificance. Harris was taking no chances. How then could Tommy contact Dixon Hawke?

Tommy went out twenty minutes later and walked aimlessly about the town. He spent half an hour in a coffee shop, and he saw a little, swarthy man, who had followed him from the lodging-house, waiting outside. The shadower was sticking to his job.

## Tommy's Visitor.

**W**ORRIEDLY, Tommy went back to the lodging-house.

Here was everything fixed up as he had wanted, but he could not warn Hawke. He wondered why Hawke had not foreseen the difficulty—then asked himself why on earth Hawke should think he would be so closely followed.

He went into the little room and sat on the edge of the bed, his mind working at full pressure, although he could see no safe way out of the difficulty.

Then there was a light tap at his

door. Startled, for no one had shown any interest in him when inside the house, he said, "Come in."

The door opened softly, and a shabbily-dressed man slipped inside, closed the door without a sound, and then stood looking into Tommy's face. He was middle-aged, grimy-faced, but something about his clear grey eyes looked familiar.

"Don't make a sound," whispered the man in a low voice. Then after a pause, and in a more familiar tone, "It's a pretty good disguise, Tommy, isn't it?"

Tommy opened his mouth to call a greeting, then remembered the situation and whispered: "Guv'nor!"

It was Dixon Hawke—in a brilliant disguise.

Tommy recovered quickly from his surprise, and asked urgently:

"What on earth are you doing here, guv'nor?"

"I've come to find whether you've had any luck," smiled Hawke. "I wasn't sure if you'd be able to get a message to me."

"And I was just thinking you'd forgotten something for once!" exclaimed Tommy excitedly. "Guv'nor, the plot's working. I followed Harris, and two roughnecks had a go at me. Then—"

He told Hawke exactly what had happened, and the detective's eyes reflected something of the youngster's excitement.

"You must have done the job well, Tommy," he said. "I thought it might take several days to get in with the gang. Yes, there is a gang," he added with certainty. "I've been right into the history of the case. Small burglaries and robberies have yielded the thieves over five thousand pounds in the past month. But what is worse than that, several small shopkeepers have been ruined because of the thefts. We've got to stop it, and this is a golden opportunity."

"What's the right thing for me to do?" demanded Tommy.

# Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"Be at the corner of Cross Street and Bell Road, as instructed," said Hawke, "and do everything you're told. Don't take any notice of any car that might be following you. Is that clear?"

"Absolutely," said Tommy eagerly.

"Good. If the people you're driving notice anyone following, and make plans to deal with them, don't do anything to help the pursuers," said Hawke.

Tommy looked worried.

"But supposing they're planning to crash you, guv'nor?"

"I'll look after my part, if you do exactly as you're told," said Hawke.

"Obedience to the letter is essential, old son. I know I can rely on you."

"Of course you can," said Tommy.

## The Chase Begins.

HAWKE went out quietly soon afterwards, having explained that he, too, had booked a room at the lodging-house, under a false name.

Left alone, Tommy considered his instructions, and he was a little worried. But Hawke obviously knew what he was about, and when, ten minutes before the appointment, Tommy left the house, he was feeling confident that Hawke would be all right.

At the rendezvous, he found Harris and his assistants.

"Okay, come with us," said Harris, and he led the way through the gathering dusk to a narrow alley, at the far end of which was a tiny shed. Inside the shed was a small but powerful car.

"Gee, she's a beauty!" exclaimed Tommy.

"I'll say," agreed Harris. "She can move. Now, listen, son. You do what you're told and keep your trap shut, and you're good for a tenner. Drive to Bennett Street Post Office—know it?"

"I'm not sure," Tommy said.

"Slim will tell you the way," said Harris. "Be there in twenty minutes, and when I come up, have the engine going. Get that?"

"Okay."

Just under twenty minutes later, at the corner of a street where a post office was situated, Tommy had the car's engine going, and from the rear of the post office came Harris, carrying a small suit-case. He huddled the case and himself into the back, and Tommy moved the car off.

Tommy was worried, because he saw nothing behind him. Was it possible that Hawke had failed to keep contact?

"That's another easy one," Harris said, obviously well satisfied. "Tell the kid to drive to the house, Slim."

Slim gave instructions for Tommy to drive to a house in the residential quarters of the town. It was a moonlit night, and he was able to see the house, standing in its own grounds, when he pulled up. But as he did so, Harris exclaimed—

"There's a car behind us!"

"Well, we aren't the only people with a car on the road," muttered Slim, but it was clear that he was startled by Harris's information. The other car, its side-lights just visible, had stopped some way behind them. Harris muttered—

"Drive round the street, kid, slowly."

Tommy obeyed, his heart thumping, but his nerves quite steady. It would be Hawke behind him, of course. The second car followed, also going slowly, and Harris leaned forward—

"Make for the open country," he ordered.

Obviously the man was scared out of his wits. He had grown used to successful, danger-free jobs, and the threat of trouble worried him. Tommy was also worried, for he could not see how Hawke was going to overcome the difficulties which the discovery presented.

In twenty minutes the town was behind them.

"Pull up at a bend in the road," Harris ordered.

Tommy slowed down. The other car also slowed down, but came much closer

## The Pursuing Car

than it had been before. Harris slipped out of the small car, and then snapped—"Get into reverse and crash into them."

Tommy drew a deep breath.

"But—but I can't do that!"

"Do it!" snarled Harris, and suddenly in the moonlight the ugly snout of an automatic showed. "I've wondered about you, kid. It didn't ring true to me. If they're your pals behind that's just too bad for you, because they've been followed. I never take chances, see! I have another car on my tail, and if I'm followed, my pals follow it. Move, drat you!"

Tommy licked his lips, while putting the car into reverse.

"How—how do you know this isn't your other car?" he demanded, as steadily as he could.

"Because my car's side-lamps have crosses on the glass," rasped Harris. "Now crash them!"

Tommy eased off the brakes. Surely Hawke would do something, would not allow the car to be crashed. It seemed incredible that Hawke was sitting at the wheel of the following car and Tommy was now going to do his best to kill him.

"Faster!" ordered Slim, at Tommy's side.

After a moment the crash came. Tommy was reversing at no more than ten miles an hour, but even then, the crash was enough to jerk him forward in his seat.

Before he had recovered himself, Slim had a gun poking into his ribs, while Harris had climbed out and crossed to the second car. He might be scared, but he intended to deal with the danger.

Then Harris exclaimed, and Tommy, screwing his head round, stared in bewilderment.

A complete stranger, a little fat man, climbed out of the car, and grabbed at the wing to save himself from falling.

"I mush—hic—I must—'pologise for—following yoush," he hiccupped. "An' for—smashin' into—your car—

hic! Can't shay how—hic!—shorry I am. S'fact. I think—hic!" He staggered again, and then with great deliberation sat on the running-board of his car, the bumper and radiator of which were damaged by the collision. "I'm tired," he declared. "Hic—I I thought you—mebbe you would be going—hic!—my way!"

Harris had drawn back, and Tommy heard him say—

"It's a drunk—he's blotto. We'll leave him."

### A Warning For Harris.

HARRIS got back into the car, which was not damaged. The drunken driver was left sitting by the roadside, hiccupping and still apologising.

Harris put his gun away, as did Slim, and Tommy considering it would be in keeping with his part, complained bitterly about being mistrusted. Harris granted, and then Tommy drove back to the big, detached house, puzzled beyond words, and pretty worried. How had Hawke failed to keep contact?

As he pulled up, a figure emerged from the gloom, and a man's voice sounded clearly—the voice of the lodging-house keeper:

"Harris, be careful! I've had word about that new driver—he's a stool pigeon! It took me all day to find who he was—he's the assistant of Dixon Hawke; the local dicks have called Hawke in!"

Tommy had the door ajar, but he did not manage to make a leap for safety. Slim's gun poked into his ribs, while after a pause Harris muttered—

"So he's Hawke's assistant, is he? The little swipe. I'll teach him what's what. Hawke won't recognise him when I've finished with him."

He pushed Tommy along the drive, muttering: "I reckoned you were a little liar, that's why I had you checked up. If I hadn't been short of a driver to-night I wouldn't have used you.

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Now you'll wish you'd never tried to be so clever."

"It—it's not true!" Tommy exclaimed.

"It is!" asserted the man who had been waiting. "I came here to wait for you as soon as I heard, Harris."

"Okay," said Harris, and pushed Tommy roughly up on the porch. With two guns covering him, Tommy was completely helpless. He heard footsteps, and then, before the door opened, a voice said—

"Is that you, Harris?"

"Yeah, with the goods," said Harris. "Open up."

The door opened. A faint glow of light showed from the hallway. Tommy was pushed through, but as he staggered into the hall he heard another voice from the drive quite near at hand. A familiar voice—that of Dixon Hawke!

"Keep quite still, all of you! You're covered!"

There was an oath, and then a startled silence. Before Tommy had realised the full truth, police surged into the porch and the hall, led by Dixon Hawke.

Harris and Slim were disarmed, neither of them making a fight. Moreover, another man, well dressed and obviously in business, opened the door and was handcuffed. He was white to the lips, and trembling with fear.

"This—this is an outrage! I am a well-known public figure, a member of the Town Council!"

"Yes, I know you are," said Dixon Hawke sharply. "It was believed by the police that the racket was organised by someone high up, that was why it was so difficult to get at you. But you're caught accepting stolen goods—and Harris is also caught red-handed. I don't think your organisation will last much longer."

Tommy gasped. "But—but how did you get here?"

Hawke smiled.

"I followed you as far as this, old son, keeping out of sight. When the car

stopped, I realised it was probably the headquarters of the gang. But as I was on my own, without the police, I had to gain time and deal with Harris's escort car. So I put another man, whom I had hired, on to the job of following you, keeping Harris away with the stolen goods until I could get the police here. It worked all right, didn't it?"

"It—it's brilliant!" exclaimed Tommy.

Harris snarled and lashed out at the youngster, but he was dragged back by the police before he could do any damage.

The town councillor broke down and made a complete confession, so that most of the stolen money and goods was recovered. The whole gang was rounded up, while later that night Hawke and Tommy had dinner with the fat man who had pretended to be drunk. He belonged to a private local detective agency.

"Well, you were lucky it worked out just as you planned, Hawke," he said.

"Some would call it luck, others wouldn't," said Hawke. "You see, I knew the man who drove Harris about and arranged for the police to detain him for the day. I knew, therefore, that Harris would need a driver."

"That's different!" exclaimed the fat man. "But did you expect them to find out who your assistant was?"

"I was able to arrange for it to leak out so that word would be waiting for Harris at the last minute, yes. You see, Harris and the others had to have their minds fully occupied with Tommy to make sure the police, with me, could complete a surprise attack. So I sent a hand-written message to Tommy at the lodging-house. The man there saw it, and Tommy's name being as well known as mine, he rushed round to tell Harris. The only way to catch an influential man like the town councillor was to time the action to the second."

"And you certainly did!" exclaimed Tommy.

## THE CASE OF

# The Country Bus



**D**IXON HAWKE'S big car was stranded on the breast of a hill three or four miles from a village.

Both he and Tommy Burke had tried unsuccessfully to discover the cause of the trouble.

"This would happen," Tommy grumbled. "It's one of the few times when we've a reasonable chance of resting, and now we're stuck on a second-class road miles from anywhere, and——"

"With a very warm day for early spring, and plenty of time to spare," smiled Hawke. "It could be a lot worse. Maybe Providence has taken a hand, and is stopping us from getting back to London in time to meet an uninteresting case which we can't avoid."

Tommy chuckled. "Trust you to see the bright side if there is one, gov'nor! Anyhow, you've a book in your grip that I know you want to read. You

stay here, and I'll walk back to the nearest village for help."

"That's taken the words out of my mouth," smiled Hawke. "You might be able to get a lift, too."

Tommy left the famous detective filing his pipe, and started at a brisk rate. Hawke was right; it was a blessing it was such a warm, clear day. But he hoped a motorist would come along.

After about half a mile Tommy heard the first sound of an engine. The noise gradually grew terrific, and whatever was coming was banging and rattling, snorting and groaning. Tommy stopped and held up his hand, seeing a very old and bright blue bus coming his way.

One wheel seemed loose, the wind-screen was badly cracked, but the bus was crowded to overflowing. Tommy groaned. There wasn't much chance of a lift there.

But the driver, a fat, red-faced man with an enormous moustache, pulled up.

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"Room for one more!" asked Tommy hopefully. "I only want to go into the nearest village."

"Bless me, there's room for another dozen the likes of 'ee," said the driver cheerfully. "B'aint there, folks!"

A sea of country faces regarded Tommy, all of them friendly, and a chorus of country voices came.

"Ay, 'tis so, George!"

"Come in, right welcome, lad!"

"B'aint never been a time when there wasn't room for another on old George's bus," cried a hurly-looking farmer. "Mind the time we had fifty up, George!"

"Ay, don't I?" grinned the driver. "Christmas, it were. Forty-three o' them varmint was in my old bus, sir, an' seven more stopped us. Never turned a customer away in me life, sir, that's me. Come on the top, says I to them, and on they climbed, holding on I don't know how. Me, I dassen't drive at mor'n five miles an hour!"

A general chuckle followed, and Tommy joined in. There was something comical about the way the driver told his tale while he drove. The rattling and banging was considerably worse inside, and although the speedometer registered over twenty-five miles an hour, to Tommy they seemed to be travelling at about fifteen.

## The Bad-Humoured Man.

CASUALLY Tommy regarded his fellow-passengers. One man was different from the rest, sitting sullen and un-smiling.

"A sinister-looking customer," thought Tommy. "I wouldn't trust him any further than I could see him. And he's a surly beggar, too."

Next to this man, who was dark, swarthy, and very thin, with dark, insolent eyes and a high-bridged narrow nose as well as thin lips pressed tightly together, was the hurly farmer who had said there was always room for another passenger.

Several times he tried to engage the dark man in conversation, but received only a rebuff for his pains. Finally the surly one stood up, and the driver stopped.

"Good-day to ye, Mr Peggott. 'Ope ye've had a comfortable ride."

"Comfortable!" harked Peggott. "It's time this old wreck was condemned. It's not fit for anything better than pigs."

He jumped down and hurried over a stile near the end of the road. George let in his clutch savagely.

"Ay—and all its passengers would be pigs if they was all the likes of 'e," he said distinctly.

"That's right, George!"

"Bad-humoured old miser," said the hurly farmer, whose name appeared to be Elias. "I'd like to know what goes on in his cottage, that I would."

"I did hearsay that he made bad money," said someone from the back of the bus. Mind the time there was so many dud half-crowns about! Just after he came to live here, that was."

"Nothing about Peggott would surprise me," said George. "Well, here's your place, Elias."

The hurly farmer squeezed past Tommy to the door.

"'Day, Elias!" called the driver. "Mind 'ee don't forget to drink my health to-night!"

There was another chuckle as Elias went off. Tommy managed to get a seat now, and was amused by the friendliness and good spirits of the country-folk.

In and out of his mind there passed thought of the comments about counterfeit coins and the man Peggott, but that was forgotten when George stopped outside a wayside cottage, whose owner was waiting outside to collect a parcel.

The journey seemed unending.

At least six similar stops were made before they came in sight of the village. On the outskirts there was a fine old

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Georgian mansion, and to Tommy's surprise the driver pulled up outside the gates.

"Parcel for the Colonel to-day, then?" someone called.

"Ay—a special! Come out o' the jewellers," said George. "Miss Whitaker's pearls been re-strung, I did hear say."

"By gee!" came an exclamation. "Do the Colonel trust 'ee w' that, George?"

A roar of laughter followed, while George began to ferret amongst a lot of small parcels in a cupboard built near him.

"Ay, trust me with anything," he said complacently. He paused and opened the cupboard wider. "Could have sworn I put that packet there," he added.

## The Search Begins.

**A**SILENCE gradually fell upon the bus.

It became a strained and anxious one, as the driver's red face turned gradually paler. Finally he said:

"It ain't there. I couldn't have put it anywhere else, I'm sure. I wanted it where it would be under my eye all the time."

"Better look under the seats," came a suggestion.

As one man, the passengers rose. Some climbed on to the road, and others began to pull parcels of all shapes and sizes from beneath the seats. None was the missing packet, however, and the driver finally said in a curiously flat voice:

"I'd best go see the Colonel, folks."

"But surely you can remember where you put it," said Tommy, unable to restrain himself. "When did you last see it?"

"When I closed the cupboard door," said the driver, "after leaving the garage."

"The door wasn't locked," said

Tommy, "and it's next to the exit door. Anyone going out of the bus would hide it from sight, and could have slipped a packet out."

"What are you suggesting, young fellow?" demanded George.

"That it was taken out or it fell out," said Tommy. "Did it really contain pearls?"

"None o' your business that I can see," said George, "but I heard it said. The Colonel will tell me all right. And I'm going to ask none o' ye folks to go until I come back," he added, looking straight at Tommy. "Including you."

## Tommy Under Suspicion!

**T**OMMY drew a deep breath. He had become suddenly conscious of a change in the attitude of the people. Suspicious, even hostile eyes, were turned towards him, but he had the good sense to realise that it was useless to show that he knew what was in their minds. They suspected him, of course.

His own mind was working fast but he forced himself to think of Hawke, stranded three miles away, and expecting help every minute. He explained his difficulty to a man nearby, and was told:

"Our garage man is as good a mechanic as any. He'll go out for you—I'll send a message by a child."

"Thanks," said Tommy, gratefully.

The man grunted and told a little boy what to do. The mechanic soon arrived, and the passengers, a subdued crowd now, heard Tommy explain what was wanted.

"And ask Mr Hawke to come here as soon as possible," said Tommy. "Tell him that there is a puzzle here that will interest him."

"Very good," said the mechanic, and drove off in an old car.

The next development came quickly. The village policeman arrived—he

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had been telephoned for and spoke to Tommy.

"I'd be obliged if you would come with me; the Colonel would like a word with you."

Tommy raised no objections. Suspicious, accusing eyes followed him. It was a peculiar sensation to be suspected of theft. He decided that if they wanted to search him he would insist that they wait for Dixon Hawke. Then grimly he entered the Georgian mansion of Colonel Whittaker.

Meanwhile Dixon Hawke had grown colder with his wait, and when the mechanic arrived he was walking up and down the road. Tommy's message intrigued him, while the mechanic, after a quick look at the engine, said quietly:

"I think it's in the carburettor, sir. I can tow you back to the village, if you'll steer, and then I'll get on with the job as soon as possible. With luck, a couple of hours will put it right."

"That suits me," said Hawke promptly.

### Hawke Meets The Colonel.

**T**WENTY minutes later Hawke was going up the drive of the Colonel's house. The crowd had gone, told that it could break up by the policeman, but the empty bus was standing outside. At the garage a message had been left, asking Hawke to go to the big house.

In a quietly furnished, if somewhat old-fashioned, drawing-room there were three people—Tommy, tight-lipped and obviously angry; George, the bus driver; and a man of medium height, well dressed, middle-aged, and of the military type.

His keen grey eyes surveyed Hawke.

"You're Mr Hawke, are you? This young fellow—your assistant apparently—says you are a criminologist, which, I believe, means a specialist in crime. I am Colonel Whittaker, and—"

"A moment, please," said Hawke early. "'Criminologist' means more

accurately a student of crime in all its branches, but does not imply that one commits it. I see from my assistant's manner that you appear to have the wrong idea about the word's meaning, sir."

Colonel Whittaker's eyes gleamed angrily.

"I don't think I'm going to like your manner any more than I do his. I suggested that as the only stranger on the local bus from which a valuable packet had been stolen, he should allow himself to be searched. He refused."

"Quite right," said Hawke. "A police warrant is needed for that."

"An innocent man would have no objection."

Hawke widened his eyes.

"Do you think so? I suggest that you put yourself in his place. If in similar circumstances it was suggested that you be searched, you would have something to say about it, I'll warrant."

"Possibly," snapped Whittaker. "But that is beside the point. And I have sent the local policeman to obtain a warrant."

Tommy burst in angrily.

"They're wasting precious time, gar'nor, and they just won't listen to reason. I've told them that they won't be doing any harm by following up other suspects, and I promised I wouldn't try to get away. At least three people had an opportunity of taking this packet, and every minute gives them a chance of getting rid of the stuff. Instead of investigating, they concentrate on me. The Colonel deserves to lose his pearls!"

"That's enough insolence!" snapped Whittaker.

Hawke smiled in friendly fashion.

"Come, Colonel—tempers are getting out of hand, and that won't help us. It is clear that you are considerably perturbed and worried, but believe me you're wrong to suspect Tommy Burke. Every policeman in London, from the Chief Constable downwards, will vouch for him. And if you doubt me, tele-



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phone to Scotland Yard and give my name."

Whittaker looked somewhat mollified, while George was looking at Hawke wide-eyed.

"Let' hev-a-duck!" he exclaimed. "I've seen this gent's photo in the papers several times."

"Now, supposing you give me the essentials of the story," said Hawke.

## Hot On The Trail.

WHITTAKER, showing clear signs of regretting his earlier abruptness, told the facts.

Hawke followed the story closely, although Tommy grew restive. Yet he knew that Hawke would give no advice until he was fully aware of the situation.

The string of pearls was worth nearly a thousand pounds. It was a family piece, and Whittaker's daughter was to wear it that evening, at a small party given to celebrate her twenty-first birthday. It had, however, needed re-stringing.

Whittaker had taken it to the jewellers in the nearest town, planning to fetch it the next day. Circumstances had made that impossible, and consequently he had entrusted the errand to the bus-owner.

Hawke nodded when the recital was finished.

"Thank you. Where do you say the policeman has gone?"

"To Farmer Elias and the man Peggott. Peggott isn't popular in the district, but that doesn't mean he's a rogue."

"The jewels have gone somewhere," said Hawke sharply. "I think we might go out to see this Peggott—and Farmer Elias, for that matter."

"We've no car," protested Whittaker.

"There's the bus outside," said Hawke promptly.

There was some argument, but he had his way. The old bus rattled back along the road, and then took a by-road

leading, said old George, first to Farmer Elias's farm and then to Peggott's. As they neared the first place, the figure of the village policeman, riding a bicycle, came from another by-road. They stopped for him, and he said rather breathlessly:

"'Afternoon, Colonel! I been to Peggott's. He won't let me go inside—says he'll set his dogs on me if I try. Proper fierce they are, too!"

Whittaker and Old George looked excited.

"That's our man, then! He's got the jewels there, and he is scared to admit the police," exclaimed Whittaker.

"We'd best get over there at once," said George.

"I think we'll see Farmer Elias first," said Hawke, and although the others protested, he had his way. But he humoured them up to a point by sending Tommy to watch Peggott's farm. It could be seen from Elias's.

## A Searching Question.

FARMER ELIAS was delighted to see them, it seemed.

"Hallo, hallo, then! What's all this trouble?"

Whittaker explained and Elias looked grave.

"It's a bad do, that it be. An' who be you suspecting? Not me, I hope—that would be the wrong kind of a joke."

"Of course we don't suspect you," said Whittaker. "But you were next to Peggott all the way. And you had the best chance to see him get out. Did you notice him touch the on-board at all?"

Elias needed so long to consider that the others—except Hawke—grew fidgety. Then:

"Well, he might have—an' then again, he might not. I reckon I wouldn't like to swear on oath that he touched it, but I couldn't rightly say for sure."

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Whittaker turned testily to Hawke. "I told you so—we're wasting precious time."

"That's what my assistant said before," said Hawke drily. "But I can't say I'm really satisfied that Peggott took that case. I think Farmer Elias would be quite sure he had seen the action, if it had taken place."

"Are you suggesting I'm lying?" demanded Elias aggressively.

"No," said Hawke. "I'm suggesting you would have seen something which happened in front of your eyes. I'm inclined to doubt, as a matter of fact, whether the case ever left the bus."

"But——" began Whittaker.

### A Trick To Tommy.

**S**UDDENLY Old George broke from the little group inside the farmhouse, and was a shade too quick for Hawke to stop him. He slammed the door behind him, and before they had got it opened again, they heard the engine of his bus revving up.

The bus started clattering its way along the road, with Hawke and Whittaker in pursuit, and the policeman almost falling off his bicycle. The bus was headed towards Peggott's farm, however, and Tommy saw it coming.

At first he thought the others were in it. Then he saw the expression on Old George's face, and saw the others streaming along behind.

Tommy tightened his lips, and stood on a bank by the roadside. As the bus lumbered up, he jumped. For a moment he thought he was going to miss his footing, but he held on. George tried to fend him off, and to keep control of the bus at the same time. It was impossible, and the steering-wheel turned towards the bank.

Tommy gripped the driver's wrists.

The bus thudded against the bank, and for a moment it seemed as if it would be impossible to prevent it from overturning. But very slowly it righted

itself. As it did so, George made a big effort to throw Tommy off.

In the confined space of the driving-seat they fought desperately. The older man got a grip on Tommy's throat, but Tommy loosened it with a right to the stomach which made the man gasp and double up.

As he sprawled forward, a package slid from his coat pocket. Tommy picked it up as the others arrived—and he saw on it the label of the jeweller's.

Whittaker tore the package open, and the fine, shiny pearls glowed.

The policeman was busy charging Old George by then—and the driver confessed. He had seen a chance of stealing the pearls and saying they were lost, and then he had snatched what had looked a golden opportunity to blame a stranger.

"But he chose the wrong stranger," said Dixon Hawke, a little later, while he and Tommy were having tea in Whittaker's drawing-room. "It's not going to surprise me, Colonel, if you find that the bus driver has quite a collection of stolen or 'lost' things—and no man would steal a necklace unless he knew where to dispose of it. He's sure to be in touch with a fence."

Hawke was right—and a few weeks later Old George was sent on a long term of imprisonment. He confessed to many small robberies in the district, and also confessed that he had made the counterfeit coins of which Peggott had been suspected.

"Peggott is quite innocent of everything, then," said Tommy. "I've never seen a more crafty-looking specimen! And why wouldn't he let the policeman search his farm?"

Hawke smiled.

"He's a naturally sour-tempered man, old son—but you aren't necessarily a crook if you've a permanent bad temper, and you keep fierce dogs to ensure privacy. Well, that was an unexpected interlude, in every way, but it's finished as it should. If everything ended like that, this would be a more cheerful world!"

# THE CASE OF *The Special Ointment*



**J**UST ring up Dr Ambleton and see how Charlie Linden, the footballer, is getting on. This accident of his seems altogether too much of a mystery," said Dixon Hawke to his assistant.

"He's still bad," said Tommy Burke after he had telephoned, "and Dr Ambleton says he'll be round this way in about half-an-hour and will look in and have a chat."

"It's going to make a mess of the Rovers' chances if the doctor doesn't get Charlie back on the field before Tuesday," commented the detective.

"Yes, they've got a stiff fight in meeting the Wanderers in the final. The Rovers haven't got another centre-forward to take Charlie's place," agreed Tommy.

Half an hour later Dr Ambleton was seated opposite to Dixon Hawke.

"Tell me how the accident happened," said the detective.

"I can easily do that, for it was old Harrod, the trainer, who told me, and he was on the ground at the time. Charlie was putting in some practice, when he suddenly collapsed to the ground as if shot. He was carried to the dressing-room, complaining of a terrible pain in his knee. It was impossible for him to stand, and so he was taken home at once."

"Did you see him soon after the accident?" queried the detective.

"Oh, yes, I saw him as soon as they got him home."

"And what do you think of it?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, if I hadn't known the lad so well, I should have thought he was shamming. There's not the slightest sign of a bruise or an injury anywhere. I've had the X-rays on-

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his knee, but I can't trace anything at all, and yet he complains of pain—severe pain, at times.

"He can't stand upright, for his left leg collapses, and he would fall if he weren't prepared. I've telephoned for Knot, the great bone-setter. He'll find out what's wrong if any man can.

"Oh, I'm not one of those medical men who object to unqualified men being consulted. But, of course, I've not done it in my own name—I've done it in Charlie's name."

"Everything must be done to get him fit by Saturday," agreed Hawke.

"He's one of the nicest fellows playing football I've ever met. He plays purely for the love of the game, for, as you know, he has a decent position in a business firm in the city."

"You can rest assured that I shall do everything in my power to get him fit," were Dr Ambleton's concluding words as he rose to go.

### The Anonymous Gift.

THE next day Hawke and his assistant were discussing the strange accident.

"There are some ugly rumours about Charlie in the city this morning," said the detective.

"Yes, I suppose it has all come because no injury to his knee is apparent. There's been a good deal of betting on the match, and they say he's sold it," Tommy said.

"I am sorry to say that idea has been strengthened by the fact becoming known that during the last few days Charlie has paid over to a money-lender a hundred pounds. The money-lender had been threatening proceedings unless the money was paid by a certain date."

"And does Charlie explain how he got the money?"

"Yes, he says that one day there had been left at his lodgings a parcel, which he found when he came home from business. It contained a hundred and

fifty pounds in Treasury notes, and a scrap of paper, on which was written: 'From an admirer'."

"I don't suppose that is believed, is it?"

"It is possible for such a thing to happen, but everybody is laughing about it. The feeling against Charlie is very bitter. But I can't believe that the lad's sold the match. I know this bone-setter chap. Ring up the doctor again, Tommy, and ask if I can be present at the consultation, or afterwards if he prefers it."

Permission was readily granted, and the famous bone-setter welcomed Hawke heartily.

"There's not a trace of a sprain or an injury there that's known to my science," he said after the examination. "What is the matter with him I don't know. But it isn't a job for a bone-setter."

"Well, I'm at a loss, too," put in Dr Ambleton. "I think we must come to the conclusion that Charlie is 'swinging the lead'."

"I scarcely think so," said Hawke quietly. "Let a poor layman like me have a look at Charlie, and see if I can find anything."

"Right; go ahead," said Ambleton. "And good luck to you."

### The Clues From The Parcel.

THE lad's no more shamming than I am," said Hawke to Tommy Burke when, a few hours later, they sat once more in the detective's room.

On the table before them were two or three pieces of brown paper, some bits of string, and a scrap of notepaper. Hawke had been examining all these articles through his magnifying-glass, which he tossed on the table as he spoke.

"He swears that he hasn't the slightest idea where this money came from. He hasn't so much pain, he says, but when he tries to stand, his knee, as he expresses it, feels like a

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jelly. There's only one thing I've found out—these words, 'From an admirer,' were written by someone left-handed."

"How did you find that out, sir?" cried Tommy excitedly.

"Well, Tommy, you know I'm ambidexterous; I can use both hands, but, naturally, the writing isn't so good with the left hand as it is with the right. Now, you see the thickness and thinness of the up and down strokes if I copy those words with my left hand—I tried it just now."

With his left hand the detective rapidly again printed out the words. The shape of the letters was quite different to those which he had already written with his right hand.

"You are right, sir!" said Tommy admiringly.

"Another thing, look at the string," Hawke went on. "That double knot. That's been tied by a left-handed person, or a person who can use both hands. I'll just try it."

Hawke tied a knot. It was identical with the knot in the string, which Charlie had cut instead of bothering to untie it.

"Another thing. See how the paper round the parcel was folded, and how the string was turned. You see, we can easily reconstruct all that. The paper was folded from right to left, not from left to right, as we should fold it.

"And you'll notice that when a woman does up a parcel, eight times or so out of ten she does up the parcel in the same way that she does up her coat—from right to left, exactly the opposite to men.

"It's a bit of a guess, but I should like to think that it was a left-handed woman who sent this parcel."

Tommy was about to speak, but Hawke held up his hand.

"Now, wait a minute! A woman who was an admirer of Charlie Linden would most likely be fond of sport herself. By Jove, don't you remember Miss Enid Daylton, the tennis champion? She was left-handed!

"I noticed, too, that her photograph's in Charlie's room. I wonder whether she could be the woman! It's her father who employs Charlie. I'll see to this to-morrow, and, Tommy, make it your business to visit all the leading bookmakers in the city and find out if there's been any heavy money wagered on the Wanderers before Charlie's accident took place.

"I want to find out if there's anybody who had any interest in the Rovers not winning. Something tells me that Charlie's accident was really foul play. And a fortune could be made by anybody backing the winning team."

### Miss Dalton's Story.

IN the luxurious drawing-room at Harmsbourg House in the West End, at ten o'clock the next morning, Hawke waited on Miss Enid Daylton.

He had carefully watched her father drive off in his motor car to business, and then had walked up and asked to see Miss Daylton on important business.

A tall, dark-haired girl of almost regal beauty, dressed plainly and simply for the morning, came into the room.

"Mr Maltravers!" she said, looking at the false card which Hawke had sent in. "You wish to see me? I don't think we've met before, have we?"

"No," said Hawke quietly. And, stepping to the door, he held the handle behind his back so that no one could enter. "My name's not Maltravers; it's Dixon Hawke."

The girl's face, which had previously been rather flushed, now lost all its colour.

"I am here," continued Hawke, "to find out why you sent one hundred and fifty pounds in Treasury notes anonymously to Charles Linden."

The girl looked at him for a moment with wild, frightened eyes, then suddenly she sank into a chair, buried her

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face in her hands and sobbed bitterly.

"There's no reason for tears," said Hawke in a friendly tone. "Please tell me all about it. You did send the money, didn't you? And you'll step forward and clear him, won't you? You see, they're thinking he's sold the match, and that his story about the gift is a fairy tale. So, come, tell me everything."

The girl jumped to her feet.

"Mr Hawke," she said quickly, trying to control herself, "I did send Charles Linden the money. I knew he was being worried—had been threatened by this money-lender. I knew that it would tell on his play, and I wanted his club to win, and I—I wanted him to win. So I sent the money anonymously. I wanted him to be free from trouble. That was all."

"Miss Daylton, I understand, and I will respect your confidences. This proves to me that Charlie has been got at by some crook in some way or another, and I'm going to get to the bottom of it all. Sit tight and I'll do my best."

The girl smiled through her tears as Hawke left, for there was something reassuring about the great detective's promises.

### The Poison Case.

WHEN Hawke returned to Dover Street he found Tommy Burke waiting for him.

"I've been to all the bookmakers in the city," the young fellow reported. "Some of them were nasty at first, but the mention of your name soon brought them to their knees. I got out of them what I wanted to know. Five of them, the very day before Charlie's accident, received a hundred pounds each to back the Wanderers in the name of Alliston. I traced the notes to the bank, and found they had been drawn out from the account of—whom do you think, sir?"

"Can't guess!"

"The account of Tom Harrod, the Rovers' trainer."

Hawke whistled. "The day before the accident, eh? Then that proves, or at least seems to prove, that Harrod knew that Charlie was going to have an accident. I wonder whether the lad's shamming—whether they're standing in, he and Harrod, to make a big haul! And yet, I can't think so. The boy's too straight, and I always thought Harrod honest as well."

"Could he have been injured in any way by anyone?" asked Tommy.

Hawke suddenly sprang to his feet.

"Why didn't I think of that before! Do you remember the case of Lady Delayne? It was suspected poison, and Dr Ambleton was called in and gave evidence. Wait, we have the records here!"

Getting the report, he read the evidence of Dr Ambleton to the effect that poison by absorption was perfectly possible—that the deadly upas tree, which flourishes in Java, is noted for its poisonous properties.

When applied as an ointment to any part of the body, it would, within the space of an hour or so, affect that part with a form of paralysis, which would last for at least a fortnight.

"We'll find out whether Charlie had used any ointment or lotion just before starting practice," said Hawke.

A couple of hours later Tommy returned with the news that Charlie had told him that when he changed, Harrod had rubbed his knee with a little ointment, as he had been complaining of some stiffness.

Hawke made no comment. He only said, "Then the next thing to be done is to see if there's any of that ointment left—if it's in the possession of Mr Harrod."

"I've thought of something better than that, if I may say so," answered Tommy. "Instead of poking about after Harrod, and perhaps arousing his suspicions, we ought to be able to get hold of Charlie's stocking. He wore

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long stockings at practice, I know. Suppose I nip along to the pavilion and do a little burgling!"

Hawke, however, did not like the idea of Tommy doing the job by himself, so together they set off on their quest.

### Harrod Gets Angry!

"AND so I've got you at last, have I? Hands up—both of you."

Hawke, with his knowledge of locks and the ways of undoing them, had soon obtained admission to the pavilion, and with the aid of a little lamp they were engaged in examining the locker which bore the name of Charles Linden, when suddenly they were interrupted by the voice of Harrod, the trainer.

The electric light was switched on in the dressing-room, and Harrod appeared with a revolver in his hand.

"I've been waiting for you two thieves," he said. "There's been too much stolen from here lately. Why, good heavens," he suddenly broke off, "it's Mister Hawke! What on earth do you want here?"

"I want to know why you put poisoned ointment on Charlie Linden's leg! I want to know why you backed the Wanderers to win, the day before Charlie's accident occurred! That's what I want to know, Mr Harrod," declared Hawke grimly.

The trainer's face in the strong electric light looked white and strained. He seemed unable to speak, but at last the words came, in a voice strangled with passion and rage.

"If it were any other man but you I'd shoot him dead for talking to me like that. I'll give you a chance to say that again, Mr Hawke, and in the presence of witnesses. I'll have you both up in Court to-morrow for burglary, and you can repeat your statement there if you like. Don't you move, or I'll put a bullet through you. Now, then, march, both of you!"

He pointed the revolver at Dixon Hawke, who, obediently, yet with a smile, held up his hands, and at the same moment, Tommy, with a movement quick as lightning—so quick that Harrod had not time to fire—scooped up a tin basin, full of water, which had been left unemptied, and dashed the contents full in Harrod's face.

With a cry of rage, Harrod flung himself at Hawke, who grappled with him easily. In a moment the detective had him in a firm grip, and then spoke to him kindly, as if soothing a little child.

"I'm sorry, Harrod—I'm sorry, old boy, that I upset you. I apologise! I can see now that I was quite wrong. There may have been foul play, but you had nothing to do with it. Now, if I let you go, will you shake hands and help me—help us?"

Harrod promised sullenly, and Hawke told him what his suspicions had been.

Harrod listened with strained, wondering eyes, and then, going to his own private cupboard, he took out a little box of ointment.

"Now, Mr Hawke," he said. "I'll tell you my tale."

### Charlie Linden Plays.

THE next morning Hawke and Harrod stood in front of Dr Ambleton's house, and as the doctor came out Hawke greeted him.

"Good-morning, doctor," he said. "I want you just to run up now and put Charlie Linden right for the great day, will you?"

"My dear fellow, miracles are not for me to perform! I wish I could oblige, though."

"Oh, I think you can!" said Hawke pointedly. "There must be some antidote to the ointment that you prepared and handed over to Harrod here as being infallible for strains and sprains, but which on no account was to be used upon any other member of the team but Charles Linden, as it was

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specially compounded to suit his particularly tender skin."

Dr Ambleton's face turned livid; he looked as if he would drop. Then he recovered himself with an effort.

"Come inside, will you?" he said, and led the way to the dispensing-room, shaking and trembling.

Then, grovelling, he poured out his pitiful tale. He was desperately hard up, and the idea occurred to him to try and make money on the football match.

For five hundred pounds he could get long odds and clear himself. But how was he to make certain of winning the match? And then he conceived the idea of poisoning Charlie Linden's knee by absorption.

A few days before, he had borrowed from Harrod, who was a man fairly well-to-do, the sum of five hundred pounds, and it was these very notes which were used in the transactions.

"If it weren't for the ghastly scandal of the thing I'd expose you—I'd hunt you out of the country!" said Hawke.

"As it is, you'll cure Charlie in time for

the match; then you can sell your practice and clear out. Pah! It makes me sick to think that you belong to an honourable profession! Harrod, once more I beg your pardon!"

The crooked doctor's antidote worked, and Charlie Linden's leg was in fine trim for the game, and the Bevers won triumphantly, but a day later the city was shocked by the news that owing to an accident while experimenting, Dr Ambleton had been killed by an explosion in his own dispensary.

A week later Hawke met Miss Enid Daylton, and offered his congratulations on her engagement to Charlie Linden, for her father had promoted Charlie to an important position. She whispered to him with a dainty colour in her cheeks—

"Mr Hawke, Charlie must never know who 'An Admirer' was!"

"Well, unless I'm invited to the wedding, I shall give it away," said Hawke mischievously.

Not long afterwards, wedding invitation cards for Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke were sent to the detective's chambers.





# THE CASE OF *The Plentiful Cigarettes*



"**H**URRY up, man! They'll be sold out before we get there!"

The speaker was a broad-shouldered man walking with a companion along the Edgware Road.

Tommy Burke heard his remark, and then looked in annoyance at the man, for he had almost pushed him off the pavement in his hurry.

A few minutes later, turning a corner, Tommy saw a crowd of men outside a small tobacconist's shop. He was near enough to hear the man inside, talking quickly and cheerfully, an expert in the patter of street auctioneers.

"Here y'are, sir, twenty for one-and-six, can't get 'em cheaper anywhere. Roll up, roll up, me lucky lads, only shop in London where you don't get turned away. Twenty for you, sir—an' you—an' you!"

The crowd did not get any smaller. Tommy smiled to himself at the way people, who heard of a shop with plenty of cigarettes for sale, rushed to it.

He walked past, and a few hundred yards along the road saw a man standing outside a high-class tobacconist's

shop. He was tall, thin, and worried-looking, and he was speaking in loud tones to a police constable.

"Where does he get them—that's what I want to know. My supplies are stolen before they reach me, and he always has plenty. I'm getting fed up with it, see. It's driving me out of business. I've got three shops to keep up, and Lake does as much trade at the one place as I do at all three."

"We're arranging to make inquiries," said the policeman, while Tommy walked on. It was curious, and he could understand why the second tobacconist was feeling down in the mouth.

A few minutes later Tommy entered Dixon Hawke's study. The famous detective was lighting his pipe, and he said ruefully—

"That's the last pipeful out of that tin, old son. I'll have to go without the precious weed soon. And," added Hawke, for he was a confirmed pipe-smoker, "it will give me added zest for the job the police have just asked me to help on, old son."

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"What's that?" asked Tommy.

"There seems to be an organised gang stealing cigarettes and tobacco," said Hawke. "The Yard are puzzled—the quantities aren't really big, although one or two large consignments have been stolen—but it's been going on for some time, and they can't put their finger on the thieves."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Tommy, and he explained what had happened on the way to Dover Street. Hawke frowned, contemplated the youngster for some seconds, and then said crisply—

"Inspector Blair kindly offered me a free hand." Hawke was a little sardonic, for Blair only did that when he was baffled. "And so I think we'll go along and interview this Mr Lake."

"The constable said the police were going to."

"Then let's get ahead of them," said Hawke.

Hawke was disappointed in that, however, for when he and Tommy reached Lake's shop he found two policemen outside, a crowd of somewhat angry men waiting to be served, and the shop empty but for the shopkeeper, and Chief Inspector Blair, of the Yard.

Blair was a big, hurly man, handsome in a rugged fashion. The shopkeeper, barely tall enough to come up to Blair's shoulder, was dark-haired and middle-aged, and, just then, flushed with anger.

"You git out of my shop, blow yer. Hokin' up my clients, that's wot you're doin'. I bought my cigarettes honest, and I'll sell 'em honest. Bert Lake's good for any inquiries you can make, you bloomin' rozzer. Buzz off."

Tommy had some difficulty in keeping a straight face; Blair was rarely addressed with such disrespect.

"That's enough insolence, Lake! I want a full statement of where you get your supplies."

"Well, wait until I'm sold aht," said Lake truculently.

"You're not selling another packet of cigarettes until I know where you

got them," said Blair decisively. "I—oh, hello, Hawke. I'm still on the job, you see."

"It's abaht time you retired, interferin' with honest business," snapped Lake angrily. "You ain't got no right to close me down without being sure the stuff's been lifted, see. I don't care if you're an Inspector or the hlinkin' Assistant Commissioner hisself. Clear off!"

Blair turned a deep red. Hawke saw him glance towards the constables, but spoke before the Inspector opened his lips.

"Blair, may I have a word with you?"

The Inspector agreed, but was clearly in a bad mood. Hawke took him aside and said quietly:

"I don't want to try to teach you your business, Blair, but Lake's right, you know. Unless you've strong grounds for suspecting that he's selling stolen goods, you can't close his shop up, even for ten minutes. He would have every right to claim damages. Don't let your temper run away with you."

Blake tightened his lips, but had to admit that Hawke was right.

"It's half-past four," he said to Lake, "What time are you closing?"

"When I've sold aht, see, or seven o'clock, whichever comes first. Stand aside, you flatfoots, one packet to one gent, one-and-a-tanner, you can't get 'em cheaper nowhere. Come to Bert Lake, the man with the goods. Never disappoints a customer, that's Bert. Twenty for you, sir, certingly. And you, sir——"

### The Two Shadows.

HAWKE, Tommy and Blair pushed their way outside. Blair had recovered his poise somewhat, and said grudgingly:

"I owe you my thanks for that, Hawke. The man really annoyed me, and I might easily have overstepped

# The Plentiful Cigarettes

the mark. But I mean to discover where Lake gets his supplies."

"I've an idea I've seen him before, somewhere," said Tommy Burke. "He—by George! Guv'nor, I remember! He was sent down for six months before the war—and for stealing cigarettes! He happened to be tried when I was in court on a job for you!"

Blair's eyes gleamed.

"If that's right, Burke, it will be a great help. I'll check up, and have the shop watched closely."

But Hawke interrupted before Blair made off.

"Can I make another suggestion, Blair?"

"Depends what it is."

"Don't watch Lake," said Hawke quietly. "If he's an old lag, and if he's getting these things dishonestly, he'll be watching what he does for the next day or two, and he'll make sure he doesn't put a foot down wrong when the police are at hand."

"Well, how can I work things?" demanded Blair.

"Let Tommy keep an eye on him," said Hawke. "No one in the wide world would take Tommy for a policeman!"

Blair was hesitant, but finally agreed. Consequently, at half-past eight that night, when Lake closed his shop and went towards the Marble Arch, Tommy was on his heels.

But he was a very different Tommy from the youngster who had been inside the shop for a few minutes earlier in the evening.

He was dressed in an old suit, threadbare at the elbows and knees, with a slouch cap which had seen better days. His shoes were down-at-the-heel and he looked like an East End tough. Hawke had put the finishing touches to the disguise, and few people would have recognised the youngster.

Lake walked jauntily along to a bus stop, then waited for a bus going to Aldgate. Tommy boarded the same bus.

Then just before the bus moved off, another man jumped on—breathing heavily, as if he had been running. Tommy saw with a start of surprise that it was the tobaccoist whom he had seen earlier in the day complaining to the police-constable.

"This is going to warm up," thought Tommy hopefully.

## The Rivals Meet.

THE two tobaccoists left the bus at Aldgate, and went down Shoreditch.

Half-way along, Lake turned into a narrow side street. The other man followed. Tommy just reached the corner behind them when he heard Lake's voice sound out along the street.

"What the blazes are you doin' 'ere, rat-face?"

The other man's voice snarled.

"I've a right to go where I like!"

"Well, keep off my huntin' ground!" snapped Lake. "This'll help yer!"

He delivered a punch to the other's stomach. Tommy saw "rat-face" gasp and stagger back, while Lake took to his heels and ran, without looking back. Tommy followed; the winded man was not badly hurt, and would soon be on his feet.

Tommy slowed down at the corner.

There were several narrow alleys, high warehouse walls, and several doors leading to the warehouses. Lake opened one of these doors after a quick look behind him.

Tommy, slouching with his hands in his pockets, did not attract particular attention, and Lake disappeared.

Tommy felt tremendously excited as he hurried after Lake, and on the warehouse door read: "Quick Service, Ltd." He was reading it when a sharp voice said behind him:

"Here you—did you see a little man come along here just now? Fellow wearing a blue muffler!"

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"Er—might ha' done," said Tommy, remembering at the last minute that he was acting the part of an East-End-er. "Me, I minds me own hisness, see?"

The other was the man Lake had attacked. He put a hand to his pocket, and showed a half-crown.

"Come on, spill it," he said. "It won't do you any harm."

Tommy certainly was not going to give Lake away, to this man or anyone else, but on the other hand he did not want to offer a direct refusal. Obviously, he had to send the man on a wrong trail, while he sent for Hawke.

"Okay, okay," he said, taking the half-crown with a mental reservation to make sure he paid it back, "he went into one o' these warehouses."

"This one?"

"Nope. Two or three doors along."

"Now, look here," snapped the other, "you don't put that across me. You must have seen which one it was—spill it, or I'll break your blinkin' neck!"

Tommy backed away quickly, clenching his fists.

"Two can play that game," he retorted. "I told you all I know, see!"

For a moment he thought the other would fly at him, but discretion must have proved itself stronger than his rage. Tommy walked on, with many a glance behind him, while the tobaccoist hesitated, and then hung about at a corner, apparently determined to wait for Lake to reappear.

Tommy had one thought in mind—to get back to Dixon Hawke, or at least to telephone a report. He turned the first corner, and found that it was a dead-end street. Then he saw a small van being loaded, and he realised that it was big cartons of cigarettes that were being placed inside.

Lake was standing near, hands in his pockets, obviously keeping his eyes open for anyone who came by. He glanced at Tommy, but appeared to accept him as an ordinary passer-by.

Tommy hurried on, after making a mental note of the van's number. He was lucky in finding a telephone kiosk, and quickly called Hawke. Tommy told his story, and Hawke said:

"All right, Tommy—nice work. I'll come at once. Then we'll get back to Lake's shop in a hurry."

"You won't lose any time, will you?" asked Tommy.

He left the telephone kiosk, but before long he realised that he was being watched.

Two hefty men were approaching grimly, and it flashed through his mind that Lake had, after all, suspected him.

The odds were heavy, and obviously he had to run for safety, but, as he started, one of the men slung a stone. His aim was good; the stone caught Tommy behind the knee, and threw him off his balance. Before he had recovered himself, the men were on him.

### Hawke To The Rescue!

TOMMY knew it was a desperate situation, but he managed to land a hefty punch square on the first ruffian's nose, and that gave him confidence, and also a few seconds with only one man to deal with.

He fainted, avoided a wild swing, and rammed a punch to the tough's stomach. But he knew that against such odds—for they were hefty men—he could not last long.

"Help!" he shouted. "Help, help!"

"We'll give yer 'elp, yer young snake!" snarled the man with the punched nose. "We'll break yer ruddy neck, see if we don't!" He shot out a vicious straight left, but Tommy moved his head quickly enough to avoid it.

Then the other man got home one to his chin, which made his head reel. Another punch made him stagger, and he went back against the wall, fighting desperately but groggily.

Then he heard other footsteps!

# The Plentiful Cigarettes

The two men swung round, finding themselves faced with another man—Dixon Hawke had arrived at the right moment!

Hawke was always at his best when Tommy was in danger, but Tommy had rarely seen Hawke weigh in with such speed and power.

Tommy took a hand again, and for a few minutes there was a melee, a heavy exchange of blows, vicious oaths from the toughs. But then other footsteps sounded, and the two attackers took to their heels.

Tommy, breathing hard, saw the tobacconist who couldn't get cigarettes.

The man drew up, and said sharply—"I heard fighting and thought I'd better lend a hand. What has been going on here?" His expression changed, for he saw Tommy. "Oh, it's you, is it! I wish I'd let them keep at you!"

Hawke smiled a little.

"Come now, Mr Harris," he said soothingly.

The tobacconist looked startled.

"Harris! How do you know my name!"

Hawke answered easily, "Well, I've bought tobacco off you in the past."

"I—I thought I'd seen you before," said Harris. "Well, this is a miserable turn-up. I followed a man I'm convinced is dealing in stolen tobacco, but he disappeared along here. This young poppy refused to tell me which warehouse he went into."

"He's my assistant, and was working under instructions," said Hawke. "My name's Hawke! I've heard of the trouble, Mr Harris, and I'm trying to solve it. Tommy tells me that Lake will be driving off soon with a van-load of cigarettes, and I've arranged for the police to take the van as soon as it leaves Aldgate."

Harris drew a deep breath.

"Have you, by Jove! That's smart work. I owe you an apology, youngster." He nodded to Tommy, who shrugged

his shoulders. "Well, all we have to do is to wait for the police to get busy, then."

"That's so," said Hawke. "We'll get back."

They travelled by bus, and Hawke asked a few questions on the way. Harris said he had twice expected consignments of cigarettes, but they had been stolen on the way to him. He hadn't lost much, because he hadn't paid for them, but he lost the custom.

He had complained time and time again to the police, but not until he had mentioned Lake to the local constable had any notice been taken.

"It looks to me," said Hawke, "as if we want not so much to know who gets these stolen cigarettes, as to find how he manages to steal them en route."

"I'd give a lot to find that out," said Harris. "I deal with Quick Service, Ltd. They're excellent wholesalers, and . . ."

Tommy drew a sharp breath.

"Quick Service! That's the doorway Lake went in!"

Harris looked stupefied.

"Then—then that means Lake gets them from the wholesaler; they're not stolen—he must be working in league with the wholesalers themselves!"

"And they pretend they've been stolen, and get the insurance, but sell them again to Lake!" Tommy burst out. "That's the whole lay-out, guv'nor! It must be. The sooner the police start investigating Quick Service the better."

"We'll see if Lake talks when he's brought in," said Hawke.

**"I'm Innocent!"**

HAWKE had hardly reached his flat—with Harris, who asked permission to stay—when Blair arrived. With the Inspector was the little Cockney. Before Blair could speak, Lake burst out:

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"This is a blasted frame-up! I took delivery of my cigarettes, ordered by phone. They're mine—not stolen ones!"

"The Quick Service people say you had no right there," said Inspector Blair sharply. "Don't keep trying to bluff your way out, Lake, it won't do any good. In any case, these cigarettes were intended for Harris & Co.—I've checked that on the phone."

"Then he must have stolen the other lots!" exclaimed Harris. "No wonder he's always got plenty of cigarettes!"

Lake started to shout, but Dixon Hawke stopped him.

"Lake, you won't improve your position like that," he said. "You've got yourself into an awkward position, but if you're innocent, you'll soon be cleared."

"Not by the dicks!" snapped Lake. "I know them too well. They'll send me down for this, see if they don't, because I went wrong once. But I'm innocent, innocent as air, guv'nor!"

"If that's true, why go to collect your cigarettes so furtively?" demanded Blair.

"I don't want anyone to see where I get them—they're so scarce it's best to keep a good thing under your hat!"

"That's a fine story," sneered Harris.

"As a matter of fact, I think it's the true one," said Dixon Hawke quietly. "Harris, supposing you explain one or two things. Why did you follow Lake?"

Harris looked at him sharply.

"You're wasting your time. You can't put this on me! I followed Lake to see where he got his stuff from. That's all."

"I wonder if that's true," said Hawke.

"I wonder if you didn't follow him to pretend to the police you wanted to know!"

"That's a lie!" snapped Harris.

"Lake's been caught red-handed!"

"Lake's been caught collecting cigarettes he ordered," returned Hawke.

"I think you followed him to make sure he fell into the trap—you set the

two ruffians on my assistant, and then pretended to come to our rescue, to put yourself 'in good' with us. You see, Harris, I happen to know you're the owner of Quick Service, Ltd! You've been arranging deliveries to yourself, then said they've been stolen, and have collected the insurance money, while actually you have the 'stolen' cigarettes distributed to your other branches, keeping practically no stock at your main shop. But the police inquiries were getting too hot. Something had to be done. You allowed Lake to buy, and gradually worked it so that he fell into a trap. You made him come here furtively, like this—it cried suspicion."

Harris suddenly swung round, but Tommy grabbed him, and he did not get away. That effort to escape was as good as a confession, and Harris actually made a full one later. He had worked exactly as Hawke said.

Lake was full of thanks, while Tommy demanded to know how on earth Hawke had discovered the truth. Hawke smiled.

"In the first place, I knew Lake wasn't guilty—no man would sell stolen cigarettes so openly. He would have sold them more furtively. Then, Harris complained to the police, and actually turned suspicion on to Lake by talking to the patrol policeman. So I did a little telephoning—to Quick Service, Ltd., whose delivery label was on a carton in Lake's shop. I had to find if they were honest. I said I wanted to speak to the owner, that I knew where some cigarettes could be bought, at a price. The man there told me that I must refer to Harris, who was the real owner. It wasn't so difficult, you see. But I couldn't be sure that Lake wasn't helping Harris in the fraud, and had to let it work itself out completely."

"If you ask me, it's a bloomin' marvel," enthused Lake. "Any time you want cigarettes or tobacco, ask me, guv'nor—I'll make sure yer get them."

# THE CASE OF *The Lost Radium*



**T**HE telephone bell shrilled, disturbing the peace of the cosy consulting - room of Dixon Hawke, the eminent Dover Street detective.

Hawke, sitting in an armchair before a roaring fire, reading a book, glanced across at Tommy Burke, his young assistant.

"Just see who that is on the phone, laddie," he said.

Tommy lifted the receiver from its stand, then he turned aside to Hawke.

"It's Dr Rupert Fentiman. He would like to speak to you."

"Get the car out quickly," the famous detective said after a few moments' talk on the phone. "Dr Rupert Fentiman wishes to see me in the operating theatre at the General Hospital. I'll tell you all about it on the way."

Five minutes later Tommy Burke was driving the high-powered car through the busy streets of London on their

way to the hospital. Hawke, sitting at the boy's side, briefly explained the doctor's reason for consulting him.

"It seems that Rupert Fentiman was carrying out some special treatment on a patient, helped by his two assistants, Dr Crowther and Dr Kane. The treatment required the use of radium, and it now appears that the radium, which, Fentiman says, is worth two thousand pounds, has mysteriously disappeared. After informing the police he decided to call me up, for, as you know, Tommy, he's an old friend of mine."

"Oh, I expect it's only been mislaid," remarked Tommy. "Strikes me it's a pity he called in the police before consulting you."

"Perhaps you're right, lad, but here we are."

They were immediately met by the secretary of the hospital as they entered the building. He led the way along a corridor to the lift, and soon they were

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No: 7

being run up to the top floor, where the operating theatre was situated.

"Inspector M'Phinney arrived only a minute ago from Scotland Yard," the secretary told them. "It's a most mysterious affair, and I trust the radium will be found. Of course, it must still be somewhere in the theatre."

Hawke smiled at his young assistant. Inspector M'Phinney, of Scotland Yard, was an old friend of theirs. He was a stent, genial, good-natured officer, and Hawke had very often helped him on difficult cases in the past.

The double swing-doors leading into the operating theatre were locked when they approached them, but when the secretary knocked, they were opened by the police inspector.

"Ah, Hawke, you're just in time to hear what Dr Rupert Fentiman has to say about the disappearance of this radium," said the inspector.

The famous doctor shook Dixon Hawke by the hand. Then he introduced the detective and Tommy to his two assistant doctors, and without loss of time began to explain what had happened.

"I had just completed some treatment in which the use of radium played an important part," said the tall, good-looking doctor with a ring of triumph in his voice. "After the patient had been removed from the theatre on a wheeled stretcher, we all three went into that small room there to change into our ordinary clothes, for you will understand that after spending several hours in the atmosphere of the operating theatre we were all anxious to get out for a breath of fresh air."

Hawke nodded in agreement, and Inspector M'Phinney took out his pocket-book to make some notes.

"Well," continued the doctor, "I had noticed the tube of radium in its special container just after the treatment had been completed, but when I looked again later, it was not there."

"Yes, I remember seeing it in the container," confirmed Dr. Kane.

"And I thought that either Dr Fentiman or Dr Kane had moved it when I noticed it was not there," added Dr Crowther.

### Search In Operating Theatre.

HAWKE turned to the doctor. "Did you notice the tube of radium in the container after the patient had been removed?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," answered Rupert Fentiman. "And between that time and the moment when I discovered it was gone, nobody entered the theatre. One of us was either in here or in the dressing-room all the time, and would have seen anyone entering the swing doors."

"At first I thought the radium tube must have in some way become mislaid with the other instruments, but when we searched all the cabinets and various containers it was not to be found."

"And then you called in the police?" questioned Hawke.

"Well, not at once," answered the surgeon, "for the idea that the valuable tube had vanished into thin air seemed to be absolutely impossible. Again we checked all the instruments and medical stores, and even searched every square inch of the floor, for you know it was only a very small tube, but without result."

Hawke glanced round the theatre and walked towards one of the windows, which was open a few inches at the bottom. It overlooked the hospital grounds, and as he pushed it further open, he picked something up from the window-sill and slipped it into his pocket.

"When was this window opened?" he inquired.

"That's been open for some time," replied Fentiman. "While I was working, I told one of the nurses to raise it a few inches."

"And did you leave the theatre,



# The Lost Radium

doctor, when you telephoned to Scotland Yard and to me?"

"No, I need the telephone that you see on the table over there. None of us left the theatre, and only you, your assistant, and the inspector, have entered it since the startling discovery was made. Why, Hawke, I—I consider this terrible happening casts a slur upon my profession and this hospital. You must help us. You must clear up this mystery," declared the surgeon.

Inspector M'Phinney came forward, and even in those tense moments his genial face seemed to be smiling.

"I think all three of you had better turn out your pockets. If the tube cannot be found in this room, I must make sure that none of you has it hidden on your person. Don't you agree, Hawke?"

Dixon Hawke nodded. He had been going to make such a suggestion, although he was sure the tube would not be found in the doctors' pockets, yet for a reason of his own he had wanted to see the insides of their pockets.

The tube of radium was not found, and five minutes later Tommy Burke found himself going down in the hospital lift with Hawke.

The boy-sleuth had a questioning look on his face, for Hawke's rather abrupt departure from the operating theatre had surprised him. The famous detective had appeared satisfied to leave the investigation in the hands of the Scotland Yard official.

"I thought you'd have made a search for this tube yourself, sir. Although nobody has been in or out of the place except ourselves, surely one of those doctors hasn't stolen it!" suggested Tommy.

Hawke gave his young assistant a wink.

"I guess nobody is above suspicion when something worth two thousand pounds is missing, but I know that the tube of radium will not be found in the operating theatre or the dressing-room."

"What? Then you know how it vanished!"

Just then the lift stopped on the ground floor, and Hawke did not reply. It was just getting near black-out time as they hurried from the hospital, and the detective switched on the shaded lights of the car and took the wheel, but he had only driven as far as the corner of a nearby street, when he brought the powerful machine to a stand-still.

"Now, listen carefully to this, Tommy. I want you to wait on the other side of the road opposite the hospital entrance until Dr Crowther comes out, then follow him. Find out all about his movements, and phone me any addresses he visits, but take care he doesn't see you shadowing him."

"Righto, gov'nor. But d'you think he's taken the radium?"

Dixon Hawke slapped his young assistant on the back.

"Not so fast, m'lud. At least I found two important clues while we were in the operating theatre, but off you go, and don't forget to phone me."

## The Doctor's Destination.

**S**TANDING in the shadows of a doorway of a shop that had already closed for the day, Tommy watched the hospital entrance.

The minutes passed slowly, and half an hour went by before the sturdy form of Dr Crowther appeared at the head of the steps. Walking with him was Dr Kane, and they both turned up the road at a brisk pace.

At the end of the road the two surgeons stopped and engaged in earnest conversation.

Tommy decided they were still discussing the disappearance of the radium, and he was not many yards away when Crowther said good-night to Dr Kane and turned down a narrow side-road.

The surgeon was walking very fast, and when they came out into a busy shopping thoroughfare he stepped into

# Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

the road and hailed a passing omnibus.

"He's off!" snorted Tommy.

A sudden sprint, and the lad reached the omnibus just as the driver was starting again. Gripping the handrail, he swung himself on to the platform as Crowther mounted the steps to the top deck. Tommy stayed downstairs and took a seat near the door.

"Camberwell, Dulwich, Forest Hill, and Sydenham," the youngster muttered when he glanced at a board upon which was painted the stopping-places of the omnibus.

Tommy took a ticket for Sydenham and then settled down to watch for Crowther coming down from the top deck. They ran through Camberwell and Dulwich, but at Forest Hill the surgeon left the bus. Tommy allowed the omnibus to travel about another fifty yards before he also dropped on to the road.

There were now few people about, and he had to be careful that the surgeon did not see him. Crowther turned off the main road, and after going along several roads they came into a quiet, almost rural spot.

"At last," breathed the youngster.

Dr Crowther walked towards a house that was partly hidden by a high hedge in front of it. From a safe distance Tommy saw him open an iron gate and disappear behind a hedge. A few moments later there came the sound of a door being opened, followed by the murmur of voices, then the door being slammed.

Tommy moved to the back of the house and was pleased to find that the garden gate opened when he turned the handle. The first thing he noticed was a stone-paved path running up to the house, which was in complete darkness. There was a grass border on the path, and he walked upon this so that his footfalls should not be heard.

He had just reached an outhouse, when a low growl from the shadow of a wall brought him sharply to a standstill.

Between him and the house was a

watch-dog, and then he remembered that Dixon Hawke had warned him not to let Crowther know that he was being followed. If he moved on, the dog would surely bark and raise the alarm, so he decided to retrace his footsteps.

## The Dog In The Garden.

"NOW I must find a public telephone and let the guv'nor know the address of this place," thought Tommy, and at that moment he heard a cooing sound coming from an out-house in the garden.

A second later the peace of the night was broken by the loud barking of a wolf-hound. Tommy realised it was the dog he had heard growling, and he took to his heels and started to run down the garden path.

He had only run a few paces, however, when the dog leapt out of the shadow of the wall, right into his path.

He stopped for a second, and the dog seized the opportunity to leap straight at his head. Tommy ducked suddenly, and as the dog sailed over his head, he punched upwards and sideways with all his might. His fist landed with a thud and knocked the wind out of the dog, which fell in a heap near the wall. Before it could turn, he had rushed to the door and was out into the back street, with the door between him and the dog.

"Crikey, that was a near go!" panted the young sleuth, and then he settled down to a steady run, determined not to lose any time in telephoning Dixon Hawke.

Meantime the famous private detective had returned to their flat in Dover Street. For some time he sat at his desk examining a strange object, a small, slate-coloured feather. After that he had called up Scotland Yard, asking for Inspector M'Phinney to call at Dover Street as soon as possible.

"Umph. I'm certain there's a clever criminal brain behind this theft,"

## The Lost Radium

mused Hawke. "Hullo, there goes the bell!"

He hurried to the front door of the flat, and a few moments later returned to his consulting-room, accompanied by Inspector M'Phinney.

"Well, Hawke, this missing radium is a bit of a mystery," began the genial

I did not remain to help you to make a search because I knew that the tube of radium was not to be found in the operating theatre or the dressing-room. Instead, I decided to return here and look up my records of any criminal who would be likely to tackle a job like this."



*As the dog sailed over his head, Tommy punched upwards with all his might.*

Scotland Yard man. "The way you cleared off without troubling to make a search of the operating theatre made me think you weren't interested, but just now, when I returned to the Yard, they told me you wished to see me."

Dixon Hawke nodded and motioned the inspector to a chair.

"Oh, I'm quite interested, M'Phinney.

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed M'Phinney, puffing out his cheeks and filling his pipe with some of the detective's special brand of tobacco. "You were quite right, too! Despite another close search, the stuff wasn't found, but how could it disappear when nobody had entered or left the rooms? Hawke, if you're so sure the radium wasn't

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

in the operating theatre, perhaps you know where it is to be found!"

Dixon Hawke's clean-cut face did not betray his thoughts. At that moment the telephone bell rang, and the detective moved across to his desk.

"At this moment I've no idea where the radium is to be—hullo, hullo, is that you speaking, Tommy?" asked Hawke. "Ah, good lad! So you followed him to the house, and the address is—one moment, and I'll write it down. Yes, yes, you were chased by a dog. And you heard a cooing sound coming from an out-house. All right, Tommy, come along to Dover Street as quickly as you can."

Dixon Hawke replaced the telephone receiver and turned to the inspector.

"Just now I was going to say that I had no idea where the radium would be found, but now I've had a few words of conversation with my young assistant, and I think I'm hot on the scent."

"Hot on the scent!" echoed the inspector. "Hawke, how do you do it?"

Dixon Hawke was now standing with his back to the roaring fire. Between his fingers he twirled the small white and grey feather which he had picked up from the desk. He paid no heed to the remarks of the Scotland Yard man.

"I've asked you to call, M'Phinney, to tell me what you know about a criminal who is known in the underworld by the name of Chloroform Jim."

Inspector M'Phinney's face became thoughtful, then he brought his big fist down on the arm of the chair.

"Chloroform Jim. Ah, I remember him, but this isn't any of his handiwork," he said.

Hawke shrugged his shoulders non-committally.

"You remember that Chloroform Jim is a master crook, who a few years ago was a doctor with one of the largest practices in London?"

"Ay, Hawke, and I know we want to lay our hands upon him for a doping job he carried out in Mayfair last year, when the scoundrel got clean away with thousands of pounds' worth of jewels.

But if you think Chloroform Jim has pulled off this job, I'm afraid you're mistaken, because we feel sure he's lying low somewhere in America."

Once again Dixon Hawke gave his shoulders a shrug.

"Very well, M'Phinney, then I shall be much obliged if you will meet me in the operating theatre of the General Hospital at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. I also want you to send one of your detectives round here first thing in the morning with a search warrant. I shall want him to give my young assistant a hand."

Inspector M'Phinney struggled out of his chair, reached for his hat; then Hawke and Tommy, who had now returned, both saw him to the door.

A minute or two later, Hawke and Tommy Burke were alone in the consulting-room. The youngster was about to explain how he had shadowed Crowther, when Hawke silenced him with a gesture.

"You can tell me all about that when we're in the car, young 'un. We've a night's work before us and no time to spare, so ask Mrs Benvie to get you some food."

"A night's work, sir!" beamed Tommy.

"Yes; we're going to pay a visit to the place you tracked Dr Crowther to at Forest Hill. We're going to do some house-breaking," was Hawke's quiet reply.

### Hawke's Strange Request.

PROMPTLY at eleven o'clock the next morning, the three surgeons and Inspector M'Phinney were assembled in the operating theatre of the General Hospital. Dr Rupert Fentiman walked nervously up and down the glass-domed room as they awaited the arrival of Dixon Hawke. Inspector M'Phinney was the only one who appeared at his ease, and his chubby face was wrinkled with his usual smile.

At last the swing doors opened and

# The Lost Radium

the man from Dover Street entered, carrying a silk top hat and wearing a long-tailed morning-coat.

"Good-morning, gentlemen. I must apologise for being a few minutes late," said the private detective as he nodded to each of the surgeons and the inspector. "Perhaps you are wondering why I have asked you to meet me here?"

Dr Rupert Fentiman stamped across the theatre and stood before the detective. There was a look of annoyance in his deep-set eyes.

"As you know, Hawke, I am a busy man, and cannot afford to waste my time. The inspector had told us that you arranged this—this melodramatic meeting here. It's a lot of nonsense to think you can find the tube of radium in this place, for every nook and cranny has been searched. Why, anyone would think that you knew just where to place your hands upon the missing tube!"

Dixon Hawke smiled.

"I do, doctor, and I think I know who is the thief. The object of this meeting is to prove that I have not made a mistake."

"You know!" exclaimed Dr Rupert Fentiman. "Oh, nonsense, nonsense!"

Inspector M'Phinney began to scratch his head. He was watching Hawke expectantly.

## The Two Scraps Of Paper.

HAWKE walked to a table and took a small metal cylinder from his pocket.

He unscrewed one end of it and drew out two pieces of thin paper. Four pairs of curious eyes were turned upon him as he handed one slip of paper to the inspector and the other piece to Dr Rupert Fentiman.

"Now I wish to assure you that I am not trying to fool you. I only want to make a little experiment, and I shall be obliged if you will both kindly write a few words upon these pieces of paper, sign your names, then roll up the papers

and place them again inside this cylinder," directed the detective.

For a few moments the men stood gaping at each other, then Fentiman shrugged his shoulders, scribbled something upon his piece of paper, and placed it in the small cylinder. Inspector M'Phinney, scarcely able to suppress a laugh, did likewise.

"Thank you," said Hawke, refitting the end of the cylinder and slipping it in his pocket. "I shall now be obliged if Dr Fentiman will repeat what took place in the operating theatre after he had completed the operation yesterday afternoon."

The famous surgeon's nerves had become rather frayed.

"What did we do?" he cried. "I told you yesterday that we were all anxious to get out for a change of air after being nearly four hours in the theatre."

Dr Kane stepped forward.

"As soon as the patient had been removed, we prepared to change from our uniforms and began to discuss certain interesting features of the case," he explained.

"Quite so," nodded Hawke, "and I suppose that neither of you did particularly notice what the others were doing?"

"Of course not, but are you suggesting that one of us had anything to do with stealing the radium?" exploded Crowther.

The detective paid no heed to the question. He walked to the window, which was a few inches open, just as it had been when the radium was missed. Then he pointed to the swing doors.

"Suppose that I represent one of you, and as you were not watching each other I want everybody to look away from me. Please fix your eyes on the doors for a few moments."

The surgeons and M'Phinney obeyed, and thirty seconds later Dixon Hawke moved away from the window.

"Well, that is all we can do for the present. We must now wait until the photo rings, and when it does, I want

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Dr Fentiman to take up the receiver and call out his name. After he has received a message, he will hand the phone to Inspector M'Phinney, who will do the same thing."

### A Forceful Demonstration.

TO each of the men in the operating theatre the twenty minutes that passed before the telephone rang seemed like an hour. The famous doctor jumped up from his chair as the bell shrilled, and there was a tense expression upon his learned face. "You want me to answer it!" he stammered.

Hawke nodded, and the doctor picked up the receiver and stated his name. A few seconds later the receiver dropped from his hand.

"What does this mean, Hawke? I wrote on that piece of paper—'Hawke is mad,' and signed my name with five crosses under it. Whoever has just spoken to me has read out the message and explained that my signature has the five crosses under it."

The man from Dover Street held up his hand for silence as the police inspector took up the receiver, and they all saw M'Phinney's face become serious. He turned to Hawke when he had heard his message.

"Look here, I wrote on my slip of paper—'The patient must have swallowed it,' and that's the message I've just received. What does it all mean, Hawke?"

Dixon Hawke smiled.

"That, gentlemen, is a demonstration of how the tube of radium was removed from this operating theatre. In the same way that I despatched your messages, Dr Crowther there sent the radium tube out of this room."

For a moment there was silence. Then Crowther leapt to his feet, but was grabbed by Inspector M'Phinney.

"It's a lie!" shrieked Crowther. "You can't prove it!"

Dr Fentiman clutched at the table to

steady himself. He was trembling, and his face was deathly white.

"Please explain, Hawke. Please tell us how you made this dreadful discovery," he implored.

Dixon Hawke's eyes were upon Crowther—the doctor had gone limp in the strong grip of the inspector. His nerve had suddenly failed him, and when he tried to speak, only a choking sound came from him.

### The Large Pocket.

THE famous detective thrust his hand into his coat pocket and took out a crumpled white and grey feather.

"My suspicion was first aroused when I found this feather on the sill of the open window yesterday. I instantly recognised it was the feather of a pigeon."

Dr Rupert Fentiman's eyes opened wide.

"Yes, yes, Hawke. Go on," he stammered.

"When you turned out your pockets I was not interested in the articles you had in them, and I did not expect to see the tube of radium, but I was very keen to see the lining of your pockets. I saw nothing unusual about the lining of Dr Fentiman's or Dr Kane's pockets, but I was struck by the exceptional size of the tail-pocket in Dr Crowther's coat. Then I saw a chalky, whitish substance sticking to the lining of this large pocket, and at once I knew that a bird had been carried in it."

Dr Kane gripped the detective by the arm.

"D'you mean to say that a pigeon was in the pocket of Crowther's coat hanging up in the ante-room all the time the operation was in progress?" he asked incredulously.

Dixon Hawke nodded.

"The pigeon could not escape from the deep pocket, and could have remained there for hours. When you and Dr Fentiman were talking, Crowther

# The Lost Radium

grasped the opportunity to slip the radium tube into a cylinder similar to that in which Inspector M'Phinney and Dr Fentiman placed the slips of paper they scribbled upon. Then as soon as he had put on his coat he took the pigeon from his pocket, clipped the cylinder to the bird's leg, and pushed it out of the open window. But while the pigeon was in the pocket of his coat it must have loosened one of its breast feathers, which I found on the window-sill."

## A Present For M'Phinney!

FENTIMAN struck the table with his fist.

"Dixon Hawke is right. I remember that Crowther was the first to change from his operating coat and return to the theatre. That's when he must have done it. You might as well admit it, Crowther."

The unhappy man had collapsed into a chair. A string of incoherent words burst from his quivering lips.

"That's all right, Dr Fentiman," grinned the inspector. "It's clear that he's guilty, but what I want to know is how Mr Hawke worked the clever stunt with our messages!"

"Very simple, M'Phinney," said the Dover Street detective. "My young assistant tracked Crowther to Morton Lodge at Forest Hill when he left the hospital yesterday, and Tommy made the important discovery that a cooing sound was coming from an outhouse behind the Lodge. At this moment the young 'un is at Morton Lodge with the detective you sent along this morning with a search warrant. They received the messages on the slips of paper when the pigeon, which I had brought here in one of my coat pockets, flew back to its loft. I clipped the cylinder to its leg and tossed it out of the window when you were all staring at the swing doors, and I had instructed Tommy to phone us the messages."

Inspector M'Phinney's jaw dropped. "And the pigeon that Crowther used came from Morton Lodge?"

"Yes, and it flew back there with the tube of radium," replied Hawke.

"But that pigeon that you have used! Did that——"

"It also came from the out-house at Morton Lodge," Hawke interrupted the inspector. "Last night Tommy and I did a little house-breaking, and after chloroforming the watch-dog, we broke into the out-house and took one of the pigeons and a metal cylinder. I carried the pigeon here just as Crowther did."

"But who lives at Morton Lodge?" demanded M'Phinney.

"Ah, I think that'll be a surprise for you, Inspector. Hullo, there's the phone again," said Dixon Hawke.

Dr Crowther struggled to his feet.

"I can tell you," he groaned. "I was a fool to get mixed up with him, but ever since I was his assistant he's wielded a terrible influence over me. He made me do it."

Inspector M'Phinney pushed the doctor back into the chair and walked over to the telephone.

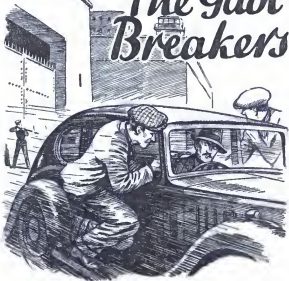
"Hullo, who's speaking?" he called into the instrument. "Yes, this is Inspector M'Phinney talking. Oh, it's you, Horder! I understand you're at Morton Lodge with Tommy Burke. What's that? The youngster's found the tube of radium! Good! And you've caught Chloroform Jim at the house. Jove! We thought he was lying low somewhere in America. Yes, I've got the chap he's working with at this end. Hold Chloroform Jim there until I come over to Forest Hill."

The Scotland Yard man replaced the receiver and moved to Crowther's side. Gripping the radium thief by the arm, he helped him to his feet. Before the swing doors he stopped and extended his hand to the famous detective.

"Thank you, Hawke. But, darn it, I don't know how you do it," he laughed, and passed out of the operating theatre with his prisoner.

## THE CASE OF

# The Gaol Breakers



"**Q**UICK, hide this!" Dixon Hawke tossed over the counter a useful-looking revolver, as the outer door of the dingy speak-easy resounded to heavy blows. "If they find I'm heels, I'm done."

Dixon Hawke had been in New York on an important case, which he had brought to a successful conclusion, when he had read about the crime wave that was upsetting Canfordville.

He had been interested, but not wildly so, until the chief of the Canfordville police himself had come to Hawke's hotel with a proposition.

It was this proposition that brought the famous Dover Street detective and

Tommy Burke, his assistant, to the Donovan Club.

The five occupants of the club came to their feet as the barman moved across and slid the bolts. A captain of the police and six constables rushed in. All were fully armed.

Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke discreetly kept in the background. It was towards the barman that the police directed their inquiries.

"Say, Mulligan, what's the door bolted for?"

"Reckon I can bolt my own door if I like," growled the man who ran the place. "What's this, a raid?"



# The Gaol Breakers

"Yes, but we're not bothering you this time. We're looking for a Britisher who blew into the town this afternoon. Seen to come in here an hour ago. No good you tryin' to hide him. Where is he?"

Mulligan could not help giving a glance towards the dark corner where Hawke and Tommy Burke were leaning against the wall. Their English friends would not have recognised the famous detective and his assistant in their present guise, for their clothes were American in cut, they wore their caps at a rakish angle, and Tommy's husky-working jaws showed that he had adopted a wad of chewing-gum. In addition, Dixon Hawke had a decided slouch, and had not shaved for several days.

The police officer caught sight of them for the first time, and immediately snapped out orders.

"There they are. Cover 'em!"

Dixon Hawke stepped forward.

"It's all right, captain. We're not going to bolt. What's the trouble?"

"You are," growled the captain pointedly. "Guy Smith, alias Rupert Flowers, eh?" He was deftly feeling and patting the detective's pockets as he questioned him, evidently expecting to find a gun. "Arrived here from Philly on the 2.10, eh?"

"Well, Canfordville is a free town, I suppose! Any law against a chap stepping off here for a day or two?"

"There's laws in plenty against the likes of you and your young side-kick being loose at all," snapped the police captain. "Put the cuffs on 'em, Dug!"

There was a short, sharp struggle, but in the end the American policemen had their way. Hawke and Tommy were securely handcuffed and pushed towards the door.

"It's an outrage!" blustered Hawke. "I'll have the Governor of the State inquire into this!"

"Aw, can it!" drawled one of the officers. "We've had a wire from

Philadelphia telling all about you. It's the pen for you."

And they dragged their luckless prisoners out into the street, pushed them into a closed car, and drove away at high speed.

## Hawke's Scheme.

MANY people in the busy streets of the mid-West city of Canfordville looked at the car with the policeman driving.

They were used to the sight, for Canfordville was suffering from an epidemic of crime that was causing some of the more nervous citizens to pack up and leave the district. The city seemed to have become the headquarters of a number of hoot-legging gangs; and their faction fights, their murders, and callous killings had culminated—the previous month—in the shooting of the Mayor himself as he was on his way to the City Hall to sign stringent measures against the gun-carrying gentry.

The police seemed to get nowhere with their inquiries. They made numerous arrests, but only of men who were of minor importance.

Somewhere in the city there was a master mind organising and working against law and order. Until he could be unmasked and captured, things would steadily get worse.

At the police depot Hawke and Tommy were huddled roughly out and rushed up the steps.

In the long waiting-room, where half-a-dozen policemen were lounging about, the prisoners were treated with equal roughness. The captain seemed to have a special spite against them.

But when ten minutes later they were escorted into the presence of the chief of the police a remarkable change came over the demeanour of the officers. The door closed behind them; the police chief rose and reached for Hawke's handcuffs, which he unlocked. Tommy he freed next minute.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

"Well, I hope my men haven't been too rough with you, Mister Hawke!"

Hawke grinned.

"They were rough enough, chief, but I wanted them to put up a good show. If anyone suspected this was a fake arrest it would spoil everything. Things have gone off well so far."

"You saw some of the gangs at the club, eh? What did you make of 'em?"

"A tough lot, but no brains amongst them. The man you want is not with them, chief. They were a little suspicious of us as newcomers, and did not talk much, but once or twice I heard them refer to a 'him.' I expect that was the mysterious leader you are seeking. If the rest of our plan goes off—well, I'm hoping to do the trick for you."

"If you do, you'll earn the gratitude of the whole town," declared the police chief. "Now I'm afraid you'll have to go to the cells. I can't trust everyone on the force. There are spies working for the outside, so we have to keep up the farce for a while longer. The captain and his picked men are about the only bunch I can trust implicitly. Have you got your key?"

Dixon Hawke lifted his foot meaningfully, then the escort closed round them again and marched them down a passage, between iron grilles, until they came to an empty cell at the end, where they were kicked inside, the door slammed on them, and the heavy lock clicked over.

### A Handy Key.

**T**OMMY BURKE looked around him with an interested grin. "Makes you feel at home, doesn't it, gar'nor?"

"H'm! Not so loud. We don't know who's listening. We've got to be extra careful if there are inside spies. American prisons aren't like ours. The police themselves are often in the gangsters' pay."

So Tommy lapsed into silence, thinking about the clever ruse designed to earn them the confidence of the crooks of the town.

It had been late afternoon when they had been arrested, and at seven o'clock a canteen of tea, some bread and butter, and some slices of cold meat were thrust in upon them by their surly-looking jailer.

He did not utter a word during his brief visit, and locked them in again when he left. They knew he would not be coming near them until the following morning.

They ate the rough meal, because they knew they would otherwise go hungry; then Hawke sat down and unlaced one of his shoes.

In the sole of this was a key, thoughtfully provided by the chief of police.

It fitted the cell door, and inside five minutes they were outside in the corridor between the other cells, listening to the approach of the jailer with canteens of tea for other prisoners.

Hawke and Tommy flattened themselves behind the door as he threw it open. Unsuspectingly he walked in, and Hawke's long arms shot out, his strong hands clamping about the jailer's neck.

There was no pretence about the way he choked that unfortunate man into silence and unconsciousness, then carried him down to the cell they had just quitted and locked him in, first relieving him of some other keys he carried and a revolver.

The two escaping prisoners got across the courtyard, and were within sight of the gate when someone saw them. A hoarse shout, a quick shot, and they knew it was time to run.

Straight out into the street they charged, and Hawke leapt upon the running board of a passing car. Before the surprised driver knew what was happening, a gun had been pressed to his ribs.

"Drive like fury!" growled Hawke's voice in his ears.

The terrified man complied. Round

# The Gaol Breakers

corners they skidded, down side streets, up dark hyways, until they were out of earshot of the hue and cry. Then Hawke ordered the car to be slowed down, and Tommy and he dropped off.

Ten minutes later they were pounding for admittance on the bolted door of the Donovan Club. It was opened cautiously, and they almost howled the harman over as they rushed inside.

By this hour of the night, it was crowded with tough, crafty-looking men, who were smoking, drinking, or playing poker. The sudden inrush of the newcomers brought most of these to their feet.

"Shucks! It's the two Britishers who were pinched this afternoon," yelled the harman.

"Quick!" panted Hawke, flourishing the gun he had taken from the jailer. "We've made a break for it. Half-killed one o' the hulls. They're on our heels. Can't anyone hide us till we can make a getaway from the town? It'll mean the electric chair for us if we're caught."

The gangsters crowded round them admiringly. It was not every crook who had the nerve to make a break out of jail.

The harman looked at a short, swarthy little man who sported a flash diamond ring. The latter touched Hawke on the arm.

"I'll look after yeh. Git back to the tables, boys, an' remember you've never seen anything of these two this evening."

Swiftly he beckoned the supposed fugitives to the door behind the bar. Even as they passed into the small, evil-smelling kitchen, they heard the pounding of heavy feet on the outer stairs. The police were arriving.

"In here!" cried their guide, and led them to what looked like a store cupboard, hut, when he had pressed something, the rows of laden shelves swung outwards, and they found themselves confronted by a flight of narrow steps. "Down there."

Down these they tumbled, into a

narrow tunnel that seemed to go directly beneath the street, and presently they were walking through a cellar that contained a vast quantity of bottled spirits, wines, beers, and all manner of drinks.

"There's not half a dozen members of the gang know of that getaway," muttered the little man. "But I guess the boss won't mind you using it when things are so urgent. Wait here while I talk to him."

## Hired For Murder!

HE had left them in the hall of what was evidently a fine house in a select residential district.

Dixon Hawke exchanged delighted glances with Tommy, and then came the summons to go upstairs.

Their late guide ushered them into a magnificently-furnished library, where a white-bearded man sat behind a desk, smoking a cigar. He looked like a banker, or a prosperous lawyer, was well-dressed, healthily pink, and had a benign smile for them.

"Carrick tells me you're on the run, my friends."

"Yes, we've made this place too hot to hold us," growled Hawke. "Fact is, we're wanted in Philly for humping off a couple of cops who poked their noses in where they weren't wanted. And now we've just left one of those thick-headed jailers looking as though he'll never open his gah again. We want to get out west. It means the chair if we're caught."

"Yes, things look pretty bad for you, my friends. It is a good job you got in touch with me. I may be able to help you."

"I'm willing to pay, boss," croaked Hawke, giving a very clever imitation of a man whose nerves were on edge.

"We've got ten thousand dollars sewn inside our coats. We're willing to split if you can get us out of this."

"That's generous of you, hut I'm playing for bigger stakes than a few

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

thousand dollars. I'll help you make your getaway, and I can promise you safety, but you'll have to pay me in another way.

"Giles, the editor of the local Tribune, is becoming too uppish. He's agitating for a Federal inquiry into the way this town is run. It doesn't suit me to have such an inquiry just now. Edmund Giles has got to leave us. You, my friends, will be the means of ridding us of him. You understand?"

Hawke laughed harshly.

"We don't mind bumping him off if it's going to please you, but how can we get at him when we're on the run like this?"

"His residence is only two blocks away from here. Carrick will point it out from one of my upper windows. He will also show you the room where Giles usually sits reading till midnight. In half an hour you'll leave by my back way and do the job. Get back here at once, and to-morrow I'll see about getting you on your way."

He picked up a book, and the swarthy guide tapped them on the shoulder and took them down to the dining-room. There they fed royally and comfortably, and during the meal Carrick told them much about the amazing man upstairs; the real head of all the crime in Canfordville.

It appeared that his name was Isaac Harriman, and he was a well-known and respected physician in the locality, a man of wealth and integrity, received and consulted by all the leaders of Canfordville society. And all the time he was the organizer and director of the gunmen, the bootleggers, and the dope squads who were making the city their headquarters.

"Now I'll show you where you've got to go," said Carrick at last. "And nothing can save you if you fail. The boss never forgives failures."

"We won't fail," growled Hawke, as he followed the direction of the other's finger, and noted the lighted window through which they were supposed to

deliver death to an unsuspecting journalist, whose only crime was his high courage in standing up against the rule of the gangs. "How can we get in when we come back?"

"The side door near the garage will be left unlocked. I'll be expecting you. I'll wait to hear the shots."

"Good," barked the detective, and a few moments later Tommy and he were out in the darkness.

A few words of instruction to Tommy sent the boy hurrying through the side ways towards the house of Giles. In his hand he carried a revolver, and his orders were to fire three shots over the roof of that house in exactly ten minutes' time.

Hawke took another direction, one that led to the nearest telephone booth, and within three minutes he was speaking quickly and earnestly to the chief of the police.

Crack! Crack! Crack! The sound of shots roused the echoes of that quiet neighbourhood. Tommy was carrying out his orders.

Five minutes later there came a tap on the door of the room where Carrick was waiting.

"Come in!" he called. "You did very——"

He stopped in alarm and tried to leap to his feet, but was too late. It was the police captain and four men who confronted him, while, at the same moment, from the upper room there came a quick shot and the sound of furniture being overturned.

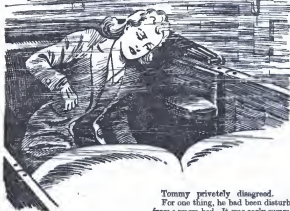
Hawke's voice came down the staircase.

"I've got him, captain. He's wounded one of your men, but not seriously."

The benign-looking man with the white hair was led handcuffed down the stairs.

And that was how the "clean-up" of Canfordville was accomplished with the aid of the most famous of all British detectives.

# THE CASE OF *The Car Fumes*



**"B**Y Jingo, gov'nor, this is a bit creepy!"

Tommy Burke uttered the words as he stood with Dixon Hawke on the porch of a small house on the outskirts of London.

It was pitch dark. A heavy wind howled and whistled about them.

"Knock again, Tommy," said Hawke.

Tommy obeyed. There was a brass knocker on the door, and with it Tommy played a thunderous tattoo upon the massive door, but the only response was the empty echo.

"Hang it, there must be someone here," said Tommy.

"Easy, old son," smiled Hawke. "Don't let it get on your nerves. I'll admit it's a bit weird, but that's as much imagination as anything else."

Tommy privately disagreed.

For one thing, he had been disturbed from a warm bed. It was early summer, yet the nights were surprisingly cold, and he had been working late for several days, and had been dog-tired. But Hawke, after being awakened by the telephone, had called him, and on the way explained:

"It was a girl or a young woman, and she sounded scared out of her wits, Tommy. She gave directions for reaching the house, which appears to be a bit lonely. It's on the edge of a small common."

"What's her trouble?" Tommy had asked.

"She's afraid—just that," Hawke had answered.

Tommy knew that such a call would always be promptly answered by Hawke, and in consequence they were now standing outside the lonely house from which the pathetic SOS had been telephoned.

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The blackness of the night had made locating the place difficult; it was two o'clock, and just under two hours since the appeal had been received.

"It's useless," said Tommy. "I suppose no one's been playing a joke, guv'nor!"

"I think it's unlikely," said Hawke. "We'll try the back door."

### The Broken Door.

USING a dimmed torch, they stumbled round to the back of the house. There was a crazy paving path about it, but many of the stones were tipped up, making walking a precarious enough business even under good conditions. And conditions that black-out night were certainly not good. Spots of rain began to fall.

They could not hear themselves speak until they reached the shelter of a low porch outside the back door. There, as Tommy was about to open his lips, a loud bang came from nearby.

"Great Scott, what's that?" gasped Tommy, starting back a yard or more.

Hawke smiled a little in the darkness.

"A door banged, Tommy. And that suggests this back door is open. I'll go in first."

He stepped past Tommy, and then another door banged. Although half-prepared for some noise now, Tommy jumped again. He felt a little shame-faced a moment later, when they were standing in a small kitchen, with the light on.

Hawke had closed the door and saw that the black-out was up. The bright light was dazzling at first, but quickly growing accustomed to it, they saw a door a little way along a narrow passage, swinging in the wind.

Bang! it went and then swayed open a little.

Tommy hurried along the passage. "We'll put paid to that," he said grimly. "I've had enough scares for to-night, thank you! I think—but I

can't shut it properly, guv'nor. The lock's broken and it looks like recent damage. See that!"

Hawke did see. The lock of the door had recently been forced, for the scratches on the metal were bright. One or two splinters of wood had been pulled from the door near the lock also.

"It's a queer show," said Tommy. "I suppose really we've no right inside here, guv'nor."

"Legally, no," admitted Hawke. "But morally we've every right. A frightened girl telephoned to me, Tommy, and now we find the house either deserted or with someone in it who isn't in a position to answer the door. I don't like it, and I propose to search the house."

It was an old rambling place, not very well kept. The staircase was wide, and creaked a lot as they went up, after making sure that the four downstairs rooms were empty.

### The Empty House.

ROOM after room was discovered upstairs and all were found empty.

In fact, not until they reached the end of a long passage, with a door leading in each direction, did they find any evidence that someone had been there that night.

Two bedrooms, one large and one small, had obviously been used. In the large one there was still a haze of tobacco smoke and, on the dressing-table, a cup of coffee, half-empty.

In the smaller room the bed had been slept in. It was a woman's room, however, and next to the bedside was a telephone.

"It looks as if she called from here," said Tommy.

"Ye-es, and then dressed hurriedly," said Hawke. "There are her pyjamas—and here's a hair-net which she was probably wearing for the night. It's the best-kept room in the house, too."

# The Car Fumes

"Where can she have gone!" Tommy demanded.

"Questions aren't going to help us," said Dixon Hawke quietly. "There's probably a loft, and there may be a cellar. We must check up on both before we decide what to do next."

There were expansive cellars and two lofts, but these also were empty.

Hawke next led the way to the front hall and looked about him thoughtfully.

"There's nothing much in the way of clues, and we don't even know what was frightening the girl. But we do know it's an odd set-up, Tommy."

"Do you think the girl was kidnapped?" Tommy demanded.

Hawke smiled. "No. However, we may as well check up with the police," said Hawke.

But he never started towards the second telephone in the hall, for next moment both of them stiffened at the sound of thunderous knocking on the front door.

"I'll go," said Tommy grimly.

Hawke nodded and himself stood behind the door.

The front door was bolted and locked, and it took Tommy several seconds to open it.

There came a second rattle before he had done so, but with the final bang the door swung open and the caller stumbled into the room.

He was a big, powerful-looking man, wearing a macintosh and a trilby hat pulled well down over his eyes. He muttered an oath as he staggered in, but regained his balance, and then glared at Tommy Burke. He had not yet seen Hawke.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing in my house?"

Tommy drew back, looking for guidance to Hawke, who stepped forward with a smile, saying:

"We'd better have the door closed, sir, or the wardens will be after us for showing lights." He closed the door and the man stepped in, frowning.

"You're pretty cool, I will say. I repeat, what are you doing here?"

## The Antique Jewels.

HAWKE explained very simply. Tommy watched the man's expression change from bewilderment to anxiety. Before Hawke had finished saying how they had searched the house and found nothing, the man exclaimed:

"It's dreadful, positively dreadful! Why should Elise be in any danger? What could frighten her? It wouldn't be a noise from downstairs; her room is nearly sound-proof. What can it be?"

"That's what I want to find out," said Hawke.

"Yes, I suppose so. What did you say your name was?"

"Hawke, Dixon Hawke."

"I think I've heard of you. My name is Martin," said the other, running a hand through unruly brown hair as he spoke. He had flung his hat on to a hall seat and taken off his macintosh.

"May I know a little more about the lady you call Elise?" asked Hawke.

"Yes, yes. Of course. She's my sister. Our parents died some time back, and we've lived here on our own since then. She—good heavens, Hawke, I'm beginning to see it now! I was telephoned about half-past eleven, and asked to go out to see a close friend. When I arrived, he wasn't there. I waited for as long as I could, believing that he was urgently wanting to see me, but I had to come back at last. I didn't see him and I don't even know now whether the call was genuine!"

Tommy exclaimed: "By George, supposing someone knew he was to be out, and put through the call, knowing that it would get you away."

"That's obviously what happened," said Martin.

Hawke asked another question: "The friend who sent for you, or who

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you thought did so, was also a friend of your sister's, I assume!"

"Yes, and a very good friend, too."

Hawke smiled a little.

"I suppose you mean they were engaged?"

"Next door to it, at all events," said Martin.

"May I know your friend's name?" asked Hawke.

Martin frowned at him.

"I don't see the reason for it. He can't be concerned in this, Hawke."

"There are hardly grounds for saying that," objected Hawke. "As far as I can see, he may have deliberately arranged to get you out of the house, and also your sister. But," he added, shrugging his shoulders when Martin scowled, "we need the information. Why should he or anyone want you out of the house? Is there anything of value here?"

Martin stared at him, obviously startled.

"Well, some jewels of my sister's, yes. She—but that's absurd. Chesney wouldn't try such a trick. He's a wealthy man."

Tommy thought that he saw the beginnings of doubt creep into the big man's eyes, and certainly Martin gave particulars of Chesney's name and address without any further argument. Tommy made a note of them, while Hawke said:

"I think I should see Mr Chesney. Will you come with me, Mr Martin?"

Martin pushed his hand through his hair again.

"I suppose I'd better. I don't like it, though."

"You strike me as being rather worried," said Hawke.

Martin shrugged. "Well, I am. I know that Chesney is very fond of antique jewels. Elise's were old—but even that's absurd! They were going to be married, that's almost certain. He wouldn't touch his fiancée's jewels. I know 'fiancée' is hardly the right

word, but they were practically engaged."

"Supposing they'd had a quarrel?" suggested Tommy eagerly.

"It's possible. Yes," said Hawke. "Oh, before we go, Mr Martin, what about servants?"

"We can't get them," grunted Martin. "In any case, I wouldn't have them in the house at night. Not now people, at all events. You see, I do a little buying and selling of jewels, although none were here to-night."

"I see," said Hawke. "Well, we'll get along. Tommy, I want you to stay here until Mr Martin and I get back."

### The Man At The Bureau.

**T**OMMY nodded, although a little reluctantly. He did not want to miss the "fun," as he called it.

Moreover the prospect of being alone in that eerie house, with the wind still howling, and the atmosphere made worse now by the rain spattering against the windows, was not a pleasant one. He was glad that there were some heavy, oak, walking-sticks in the hall-stand, and he took one out, swishing it through the air to find its balance.

Then suddenly he heard a noise behind him.

He turned quickly, his heart thumping. No one was in sight, but he heard the sound again. It was in one of the rooms leading off the hall.

He crept forward—the light in the room was on, as Hawke had left it—and through a gap between the door and the wall he saw a man bending over a bureau.

Tommy realised that the man must have entered through the french windows in the room. He watched intently.

The man was trying to pick the lock, and after a few seconds he succeeded. He lifted the lid of the bureau and then searched about quickly. After a few



## The Car Fumes

minutes he swore loudly, looked up and kept on looking.

Tommy's shadow was thrown against the wall. The hall light was brighter than that in the room, hence the shadow. The man had seen it, and Tommy saw him stiffen. He was a youngish, dark-haired man, broad-shouldered and powerful.

"Who's that?" he snapped.

Tommy tightened his grip on his stick.

"Keep right where you are," he said, and pushed the door wider open.

He did not expect what happened next.

### A Tough Scrap.

THE man gripped the back of a chair and, revealing tremendous strength, lifted it and flung it at the youngster.

The chair would have knocked Tommy right out, but for the fact that he managed to get his stick in the way, and thus broke the full weight. But he had no time to recover before the other was at him.

Tommy drew a deep breath.

He had nothing like the weight of the other, but he fought cleverly. He managed to evade two wicked punches to the chin, and then the two combatants sparred at a distance, each waiting for an opportunity to deliver a telling blow.

Tommy knew that his one chance was to keep the other at a distance, and wanted to grab the stick again.

He made two moves towards it, but each time the other followed him. Then the man swung round suddenly, grabbed a vase from a table and hurled it at Tommy's head. It missed by inches and smashed against the wall.

"You little swine," muttered the man, and made a grab at another vase. But this time Tommy was too quick for him and managed to bend down and get a grip on the stick. He darted

it forward, and the other ducked to avoid it. Tommy, close in now, rammed home a beautiful straight left to the man's chin. It took the other dead on the point and sent him staggering back.

But he was not finished yet.

Tommy went a shade too near. The man stretched out a hand, gripped his ankle, and brought him crashing down. Then he sprang on top of him, and Tommy felt the strong fingers gripping his throat.

But while he was held like that, with the blood drumming in his ears, and the pressure at his throat increasing, there came another sound. He did not hear it clearly, but his assailant did, and relaxed his pressure.

He stood up and dimly Tommy saw Hawke and Martin.

### Inside The Garage.

TOMMY had never been so relieved in his life. It was impossible for him to speak, but words were hardly necessary. Hawke had a gun in his hand.

Then Martin said in a low-pitched voice:

"Chesney, you devil!"

Chesney! This man was Martin's friend, the man who was becoming engaged to Elise Martin!

Chesney, breathing hard, looked at him, as if bewildered.

"What—what are you speaking like that for? And why has that fellow got a gun?"

"Don't try to wriggle out of it," snarled Martin. "Why, I could kill you, with my bare hands. We've seen your foul trick, thanks to Dixon Hawke. You lured me away, scared Elise somehow, persuaded her to leave the house, then came here to rob her. But your effort misfired—Elise had telephoned Hawke before she left. Hawke suspected you from the first, and we've just come from your house. We found her body in your garage."

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 7

Chesney staggered back, white to the lips.

"Elise—Elise can't be dead! No, it's not possible!"

"So you don't deny anything; you haven't even the guts for that!" snapped Martin. "She's dead in your car and the garage is filled with carbon monoxide fumes. Hawke says she has been dead for an hour or more."

"I—I can't believe it," muttered Chesney. "I—but this is madness!—I didn't lure her away—she telephoned a message to me an hour ago and told me she was stranded, that she needed some papers from this bureau. I came here to get them—she said she was at a hotel near Staines. She told me how to get in by the french windows. I—I thought this fellow was a thief."

"That's a fine story!" snapped Martin.

"It's true, I tell you!"

"Tell that to the police!" said Martin.

Then it was that Hawke spoke for the first time.

"So he will, Martin—and I think they'll believe him."

### A Smart Bluff.

MARTIN turned, aghast—and found himself looking into Hawke's automatic. For a moment there was a deadly silence, and then Martin gasped:

"What—what madness is this?"

"Just one little thing went wrong in your plans," said Hawke icily. "You planned this series of false calls to get Chesney out of his house, just round the corner, while you took your sister there, putting her in his car, with the engine running, in his garage, so that it looked as if he had done so. I think we'll find that she had discovered you were a buyer and seller of stolen jewels—you told me yourself that you traded in jewels."

"She grew frightened and called for

me, rather than the police. You heard of that and then worked up your schemes."

"You hinted that Chesney was the suspect, very cleverly I'll admit. With your sister dead, and Chesney caught here with my assistant actually waiting, you would have had him in a corner from which he could not escape."

"He can't escape!" breathed Martin. "You're crazy—he killed her!"

"You're wrong!" snapped Hawke. "No one killed her—she is alive. I indicated she was dead, but she is only unconscious, and will probably have recovered now in the fresh air outside the garage. You were very anxious to get here, so I decided to come back with you. A short time without attention won't be harmful to her. And she recovered consciousness just for a moment while I was with her, and told me you had attacked her!"

Martin went deathly pale, and then broke down, making a full confession. Hawke was right—he was a fence, and his sister had discovered it.

When the police had arrived and a doctor had been summoned to the girl, Chesney looked gratefully at Hawke and said:

"I owe you a great debt and so does Elise. But—but I didn't think anyone suffering from carbon-monoxide poisoning was likely to come round easily."

Hawke smiled. "She didn't come round although she will recover, I'm sure. I only said she did, to trap Martin into a confession. You see, I was reasonably sure of Martin all the time."

"But why?" demanded Tommy.

"Because he made one slip when first he came here," said Hawke. "He hanged on the door, instead of coming in with a key. So he must have known that someone would open it, although he said that in his sister's room nothing could be heard from the hall. A simple slip, but a bad one, and he's lucky to have escaped the gallows."

## THE CASE OF

# The Cheap Strawberries



"FINE strawberries! Big an' ripe, shillin' a pound—tuppence cheaper than control price, lidy! Who'll buy, who'll buy! Fine ripe strawberries, take a basket 'ome to yer wife an' kids, sir! Tuppence cheaper than anyone else's—who'll buy, who'll buy!"

The raucous voice of the hawker rose above the hum of traffic in the East End of London.

Streams of people passed the harrow on which reposed a mountainous heap of the luscious fruit, but few paused to buy.

It was sweltering hot, and the hawker, a big, fleshy man, was wiping the perspiration from forehead and cheeks

with a gay-coloured bandana handkerchief.

Tommy Burke was walking slowly along the pavement, and looking at the other stalls and shops. The hawker appeared to think him a prospective customer, for he shouted into Tommy's ear:

"Ere, y'ar, sir, best strawberries o' the season, picked afore you was up this mornin'; shillin' a pound. Fine an' ripe, they'll make yer girl friend say 'yes' when you pops the question! Two baskets, sir!"

"No thanks, not now," said Tommy, who was watching the passers-by carefully, for he had arranged to meet Dixon Hawke here, and he knew Hawke

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would be disguised and not easily recognizable.

"Wot more d'yer want!" growled the hawker, the heat and his poor sales apparently making him bad-tempered. "Cream and sugar with 'em!"

Tommy had to grin.

"No thanks—and keep your hair on," he said.

The hawker muttered and then started his sales-ory again. Several women stopped to buy, and then a man walked slowly up. The seller made the same offer and was refused.

"There's another of 'em," grumbled the hawker. "Wot more d'yer want, cream and sugar with 'em!"

"All right, I'll buy a pound," said the man, turning back.

Tommy shrugged and walked on, still searching for Hawke. In a disguise he knew that his employer would be extremely hot, and he was glad that it had not been necessary for him to adopt one.

Suddenly he spotted Hawke.

The famous detective was wearing a muffler and a cloth cap, his face, hands, and clothes were dirty, his forehead streaked with sweat and grime. He recognised Tommy, although he showed that recognition only with a quick, barely perceptible nod. Then he turned down a side street not far away.

Tommy followed.

### The Drug-Ring.

FIFTY feet farther along was a narrow alley-way. Hawke was waiting there, and Tommy felt excited when he came up with the detective.

"Had any luck, guv'nor?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes and no," said Hawke, who had taken off his cap and slackened his muffler. "By George, I'm hot!" He paused for a moment to dab his forehead and lips, and then went on: "I've been talking to the local police. There is a drug-ring operating from here.

Several addicts have been taken in charge, and one man was found to-day with some packets of the drug—cocaine—but he refused to say where he obtained his supply. But the police are worried. Too much of the stuff is on the market, and the distributors must be caught."

Tommy nodded in full agreement.

He himself knew of the deadly effect of drugs, and he knew also that Dixon Hawke fought drug-traffickers more bitterly and ruthlessly than any other kind of criminal. Cocaine, hashish, and opium, as well as other drugs, could wreck a man's life once he became an addict—and a great deal of the dope was being distributed about the East End.

The police had been working against it for a long time past, but they had failed to make any improvement. They knew that the dope was being distributed from this part of the East End, but, try as they would, they could not catch their men.

"Well, what do you propose to do?" Tommy asked.

"I'm going to stay as I am, and hope to be offered a shot of dope," said Hawke. "I'll be here every hour, old son—and you keep your eyes open for me, in case I have a message to pass on."

Tommy looked dubious.

"I'll do that," he promised, "but how on earth can you expect to be invited to have some dope? They're pretty careful about whom they supply it to, as a rule."

Hawke smiled a little.

"Yes, I know. But I think our man is 'Ben the Snowman'"—Hawke mentioned a well-known drug-trafficker who had been released from prison some time before. "The police have been trying to, pin it on to him, but they've failed and have given him up. I'm still on his trail and I'm friendly with one or two men who run messages for him. They're obviously drug-addicts. I expect to be asked to have

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some, as I say, and from then on things will move."

"Be jolly careful, gov'nor," urged Tommy.

"I'll be careful enough," Hawke assured him.

## No Sign Of Hawke!

**T**OMMY returned to the main road, and, knowing he had an hour to spare before Hawke turned up again, he went into a cafe for an iced drink.

All the time he heard the raucous voice of the hawker, and once or twice—after he had finished his drink and was walking in the street again—the same stale joke was repeated.

If a man refused, he was asked whether he wanted cream and sugar with them. It was surprising how often the sneered words succeeded in making a man buy.

Tommy wished he had something more active to do—and hoped the next time he met Hawke, the latter would have some orders for him.

Tommy was slouching by the alley at the appointed time—three o'clock. Hawke was late. Five minutes passed, then ten—and Tommy was beginning to get really worried.

Hawke must have been detained unexpectedly. Normally he was dead on time.

After quarter of an hour Tommy began to feel really anxious. He was convinced that Hawke would have come had it been possible. He remembered the ruthlessness of drug-traffickers; knew that Ben the Snowman—so called because he had trafficked in cocaine, colloquially known as "snow"—was a desperate criminal, who would not stop at murder to save himself from further imprisonment.

Twenty minutes passed.

Tommy forced himself to walk slowly up and down the nearly deserted side-street, his heart thumping. Every time he heard footsteps he quickened his

pace, in the hope of seeing Hawke, but the detective failed to put in an appearance.

Tommy was now placed in a quandary.

Should he go to the police and tell them Hawke was late? Or should he stay there, in the hope of getting some message from his disguised chief? Hawke had told him to come every hour, and it might be disastrous if he, Tommy, called in the police and, while going for them, failed to be on the spot.

He decided to wait until four o'clock.

Then he saw three men walking quickly along the road. Two were typical East End ruffians, short, thick-set, pale-faced men in rough clothes. The middle man of the trio was tall, slim, and well-dressed. He was handsome after a fashion, with full, curving lips which seemed set always in a sneer.

Tommy recognised him a flash. It was Ben the Snowman!

Obviously the trio were in a great hurry, and they did not appear to notice Tommy. He thought that the handsome crook seemed anxious, and certainly there must be some strong motive to make them hurry as they were doing on so hot an afternoon.

Tommy was by the alley. He slipped along it, but stayed near the street. The footsteps of the trio drew nearer, and he could hear their voices. Suddenly Ben the Snowman said harshly:

"Shut your big trap! I told you to be careful, didn't I! Well you weren't! You let Hawke get a sniff and if I hadn't come along in time Hawke would have had you up before the dicks."

"It wasn't my fault——" the man protested.

"Shut up!" Ben snarled at him and the footsteps stopped. He continued in broad Cockney, now that his temper was roused. "Naw listen, Kohler, I'm payin' you off, see! Clear aht! If you want some snow, you know where to buy it—but you don't git the money from me."

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Tommy stood breathlessly still.

Anxiety for Hawke merged with the excitement of knowing that in those careless words Ben had admitted his part in the distributing of the drugs. There was no doubt that he knew a great deal about it. And he had quarrelled with Kohler, who would not be too pleased.

But the other thing was equally urgent.

Ben the Snowman had discovered that Hawke had been offered a sniff or a shot of dope—and had done something to prevent Hawke carrying word to the police or continuing his act.

Ben, presumably, knew where Hawke was. Did Kohler?

There was a further exchange of words, Kohler mandlin and pleading, Ben harsh and definite. Then the foot-steps came again. But only two men passed Tommy—Ben and the other ruffian.

### Tommy Gets Some News.

As they passed, Tommy held his breath; if they glanced down the alley and saw him there, it would spell disaster.

They did not.

Breathing more freely, Tommy stepped into the street. He saw the man he presumed to be Kohler walking slowly along in the other direction, apparently deep in dejection. Tommy quickened his pace, for there was little doubt as to his best course.

He must follow Kohler, in the hope that the man would lead him to Hawke. If, on the other hand, Kohler went to his own home or to a cafe, Tommy would have to try to bribe him for information.

There was a positive rabbit-warren of narrow streets at the end of the road, and Tommy had to keep fairly close to Kohler to make sure he did not lose his man. It was when he turned a corner, quickly but stealthily for fear the man

would somehow dodge him, that he had one of the shocks of his life.

Kohler was there—and shot out a clenched fist to Tommy's face.

Tommy just managed to evade the blow, and was preparing to defend himself when the other exclaimed:

"Cor luv a duck! I thought it was—well, never mind 'oo I thought, see! I never meant to hand you one."

Tommy drew a deep breath.

"That's all right," he said. "I—I wanted a word with you, that's all."

"Oh, yer did, did yer?"

"Yes." Tommy knew that he had hurried his boats and he did not lose time. "Look here, can you use five pounds?"

"A fiver!" Kohler, an ugly-looking specimen, licked his lips hungrily. "Blimey, I could use five heh!"

"All right. Help me and a fiver is yours," said Tommy. "You were talking to the Snowman just now about Dixon Hawke."

The man's eyes narrowed.

"That's right, I was! Hawke got me the push—I was working with the Snowman, see, an' Hawke come along. I never neo who it was, an' I offered him a sniff o'—well, just a sniff, see! The Snowman was arased and put Hawke where he can't do no harm."

Tommy drew a deep breath.

"Show me where I can find Hawke, and the fiver is yours."

There was a moment of hesitation, and he thought the man was going to refuse. Then Kohler nodded and turned round.

"Foller me," he said hoarsely.

Tommy obeyed. They walked through endless little streets, oppressive in the hot weather, and Kohler seemed in a hurry, almost as if he were afraid to be seen with a stranger. At last they stopped walking, however, at a higgish house at the end of a narrow street. Kohler led the way up and knocked on the door.

It opened a moment later—and Ben the Snowman stood there!

Tommy wheeled round, but the

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Snowman grabbed at him. The young sleuth ducked, delivered a hard blow to the man's stomach, and succeeded in releasing himself. He turned—but Kohler was immediately behind him, with an ugly leer on his face.

"You little fool," he sneered. "That was a trap for you. We knew Hawke was after us, and we saw you talking to him. That's why we pretended to have a quarrel you could overhear!"

Tommy drew back a pace, white-faced.

He had been tricked—had fallen easily into the trap.

Then suddenly a call came from the street—a familiar call by a voice he had heard a great deal that day.

"Who'll buy my strawberries—who'll buy, who'll buy?"

The hawker was away from his pitch now.

Just for a moment Tommy thought the man's arrival might give him a chance to escape, but Kohler and the Snowman between them made that impossible. The well-dressed crook was livid with anger because of the punch he had received, and he huffed Tommy half a dozen times as the youngster was hustled into the hall.

## Hawke Finds The Solution.

THE door closed. Faintly to Tommy's ringing ears came the cry: "Who'll buy my strawberries? Who'll buy, who'll buy?"

The hall was in the shadows, but nothing like so dark as the cellar into which Tommy was pushed. He heard the door close behind him after he was shoved into a corner, quite blind in the darkness. Then, after a pause, he heard Hawke's voice.

"Bad luck for you, too, Tommy!"

"Gur'ner!" gasped Tommy. "I hoped you would have escaped. Oh, what a fool I've been! If I had gone to the police instead of following Kohler myself, I could have rescued you!"

"Take it easy," said Hawke. In the darkness it was refreshing to hear his cool, confident voice. "We aren't dead yet, by a long way. As a matter of fact, I imagine that Ben the Snowman is even now wondering what's the best thing to do. However, we've some time on our hands—tell me just what has happened with you."

It was hard to understand how, although both of them were prisoners, Hawke was so composed, as if nothing out of the ordinary was the matter. Nevertheless, the youngster made a full report, including seeing the hawker outside.

"I thought he'd help me," Tommy added, "but I suppose he's like a lot of 'em round here, he has to turn a blind eye to a lot of things. But, by jingo, some of his strawberries would come in handy now, wouldn't they? Without his sugar and cream, either!"

"What makes you say that?" demanded Hawke.

Tommy explained the hawker's way of persuading reluctant passers-by to buy. Hawke was surprisingly silent for some seconds afterwards, and when he did speak he gave Tommy the surprise of his life.

"I see. Well, I think we know how it's done now. I knew part of it before, but you've filled in the rest."

Tommy stared in astonishment and was about to gasp out a question, when there was a noise above them. The cellar door opened, and light streamed through.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs, and then Ben the Snowman, Kohler, and the other man appeared. The light was not poor enough to hide their ugly faces.

"Well, you mugs," sneered the Snowman, "you both fell into a trap, didn't you—you're no better than your dashing assistant, Hawke. I'd heard the police had called you in, and reckoned you would try to get pally with one of the gang; that's why I got Kohler working on you. I've had your place watched and you've been fol-

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lowed, in spite of your disguise, from the moment you left Dover Street."

"That was very clever of you," said Hawke coldly.

"Sure—how clever you don't know yet!"

"I know, at least, that you've made a mistake," said Hawke quietly. "Your run of crime is finished again, and this time I expect you'll get ten years. And you'll deserve every day of it."

"Talk's cheap!" sneered Ben. "If I get caught, you mug, I'll be hung, see! Because I'm going to kill you two 'fore you can do any more damage. But I won't get caught!"

Hawke said slowly, "You think not. But you will, Mr Snowman. I'll give evidence against you in the dock as surely as I will against the strawberry-sellers you employ."

### A Police Raid.

**T**OMMY gasped in amazement. So did the others, and Hawke went on.

"I know you were buying strawberries wholesale, Ben, and guessed you were selling drugs through them. Yourself, Kohler, and the other man have strawberry stains on your hands—I saw them earlier. The question was, how did you sell the right baskets to the right customers? And my assistant found that out, unwittingly. When a man comes by, your hawkers sneer a remark about whether they want sugar and cream thrown in. That's the password! After hearing that, the buyer who wants dope comes back and buys a basketful of strawberries, underneath which are the packets of 'snow'!"

There was a tense pause.

"You clever devil!" exclaimed Ben at last. "It's true, but I didn't think anyone would discover it! But it won't do you any good—you'll never get away now!"

"We will," insisted Hawke, with an irritating smile on his lips.

Tommy thought the detective was simply putting up a courageous front.

The youngster himself was resigned to the fact that it was the finish for them both, especially when Ben the Snowman produced a gun, and with Hawke Tommy was forced to go upstairs.

Then suddenly there was a bang on the front door—and another on the back, and there rose a cry:

"A raid! The dicks!"

The Snowman, Kohler, and the other man made a rush for the front windows, but uselessly, for the police were there in force.

One after the other the crooks were collared and handcuffed.

Inspector Blair was present, and he approached Hawke smilingly, while Tommy exclaimed:

"I've never been so glad to see a policeman! How on earth did you get here!"

Blair looked in puzzlement at Hawke.

"Doesn't he know!" he demanded.

Hawke smiled.

"No—I'm afraid I kept you in the dark, Tommy. You see, I believed that Ben the Snowman would learn we were on the case, and so I deliberately tried to get them to kidnap me! They did, and then I let out something about meeting you in the alley. I knew they would work out a plan to trap you also, thinking it safe, since no police followed me. It made them over-confident. But what they didn't know was that I had arranged with the police to watch you, not me! You were followed and soon after your arrival here a strong force of police surrounded the place."

"No wonder you were so confident!" laughed Tommy. "Well, Ben the Snowman was right in one way—I'm certainly a mug! By the way, have you got the hawkers?" he asked the inspector.

"He will have soon," said Hawke, and less than twelve hours later the last of the drug trafficking organisation was rounded up.



# THE CASE OF *The Doped Footballers*



**D**IXON HAWKE and Tommy Burke enjoyed watching a game of football as well as anybody.

Having successfully completed a case in the North of England, they could not resist stopping over the Saturday at Pelton to see the annual meeting of those two historical rivals, the Pelton Rovers and the Roundhampton Athletic (or Robins, as they were called on account of their bright-coloured jerseys).

And now, during the brief half-time interval, they had to admit they were watching a hard-fought game, the home team leading by one goal to nil.

A big contingent of the Robins' supporters had come over for the game, and they were noisily assuring themselves that their champions were going to equalise and turn the tables in the second half.

Tommy could not help grinning at the assurance of one red-faced veteran, who stood quite close to them in the crowd.

"One goal against means nothing to us, I'm tellin' ye," he angrily told one of the home crowd. "We're goin' to win in this half, an' I'm willin' to bet five to one on it. So there."

Five to one was long odds to offer between two such equal teams as these.

Hawke was not surprised when half-a-dozen of the Pelton supporters took up the man's offer. He booked their bets in a business-like manner, and then stared anxiously towards the field, where the teams were just running out from beneath the stand.

A murmur went round the crowd, a murmur that expressed horror so far as the home supporters were concerned.

## Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No: 7

What had happened to Ralph Watson, their star centre? And where was Hal Towler, their incomparable goalie? Both had played a splendid game during the first half, but now they were missing.

Just for a few minutes the crowd thought they had been delayed for some reason, but when Thackeray, the skipper of the team, put Charlie Bates back in goal, and arranged his depleted team minus two forwards, there arose roars of inquiry on all sides.

"What's the idea! Where's the rest of 'em? Where's Watson and Towler!"

The uproar was so tremendous that the referee held up the game while fat old Tom Bowling, the veteran secretary of the home side, explained through a megaphone:

"Watson and Towler have been taken ill. Both are unable to play."

Amid a chorus of booing and yelling voices, the whistle for the second half shrilled out.

Tommy Burke had picked the Pelton team as the winners. He was as concerned as anyone about the disaster that had occurred during the interval. As the depleted home side stemmed a dashing attack, he turned to the detective.

"Rummy business this, gov'nor. What could have happened to 'em? They were the two best men on the field."

The game went on, and within ten minutes the visitors had scored, thus equalising. The hoos of the home side almost drowned the cheering. They felt that their weakness was being taken advantage of, and all kinds of wild rumours began to go round the ground.

### "This Funny Business!"

WATSON and Towler had quarrelled and knocked each other out, said one astonishing whisper. They had got drunk, said another. They had quarrelled with the referee and been suspended, said a third.

Tongues buzzed busily. Never had

there been such a sensation on the Pelton field.

The weakened Rovers put up a great fight, but Charlie Bates, in goal, was nowhere near as good as Towler, and, half an hour before the end, the Robins got another magnificent shot past, putting them one up. After that, all the efforts of the Rovers failed to pull down this lead before the final whistle blew.

The disgusted crowd hung round the ground, waiting to hear further explanations. The red-faced man, who had bet five to one against Pelton, went round collecting his bets, and was in one or two cases accused of having had inside knowledge.

"Yes, I had a pal doping their lemons at the interval," he grinned. "It's a regular habit o' mine. Pay up and look pleasant. It'd have been all the same if you'd played at full strength second half. We was meant to win to-day."

Hawke and Tommy were nearly at the turnstiles when they were hailed from the left. Turning, they saw Dr Ward, a police surgeon, who had been engaged on more than one case with them in the past.

He greeted them warmly, for it was some months since they had met.

"Aren't you coming over to the pavilion to sniff at this funny business?" he demanded. "Should have thought it might have interested you."

"Funny business! Do you mean Towler and Watson being dropped?"

"Yes. I've just been across to see them. They're sleeping like logs. I've never seen a cleaner case of doping in all my life. They dropped asleep during the interval."

Hawke's eyes glistened angrily. Crime and criminals were part of his everyday life, but it was not often he came across crookedness in sport. That sort of crime angered him more than anything else ever did.

"I'd like to see them," he admitted.

Five minutes later he had been introduced to the group in the

# The Doped Footballers

dressing-room. The two footballers were stretched out on a table, snoring lustily. All efforts to shake them out of that sleep had failed, and cold water and ammonia bottles had no effect. Dr Ward had advised leaving them to sleep it off.

Meantime, the officials and the rest of the team were holding an inquiry. If their comrades had been doped, how and when had it been done? They had played fully up to form during the first half, and there were many witnesses who knew for a fact that neither of the sleepers had taken more than a small drink of water and a suck at a lemon during the interval. Yet a few minutes before the second half began they had complained of sleepiness, and fallen into their drugged slumber.

At Hawke's suggestion the doctor examined them for scratches that might have been made by hypodermic needles. Ward found none, although Watson had been marked in several places on both legs by kicks, and Towler had been kicked high on the hip. But, as that could happen to anyone in a strenuous game such as they had played in, not much could be gathered from that.

From head to foot the two sleepers were examined, and Hawke had particular attention paid to their feet, searching their boots for projecting nails himself.

He had heard of doped nails before this, but to-day there was no suspicion of that. Their boots had not been tampered with.

He pursued his investigations for more than an hour, and then the two sleepers awakened, complained of a headache, and seemed little the worse for their adventure, although their disgust was acute when they heard the result of the match.

As a matter of fact, I felt a bit sleepy when I came off after the first half," admitted Watson.

"So did I," added Towler, "but I thought nothing of it. Thought it

might have been the hot pavilion. Mean to say we were doped?"

Unwilling to bring the police into the matter, the manager of the Rovers privately asked Dixon Hawke to take over the case, and as the Dover Street detective was more or less on holiday just then, he accepted.

## The Rovers Lose Again.

THE Rovers were playing on Wednesday at Burford Cross, and although Hawke did not attend the match, his assistant did. Tommy came back in the early evening with the astonishing news that a similar thing had happened again.

Thackeray himself, who played outside right, had fallen asleep in the same extraordinary manner during the interval, and Towler, in goal, had been treated to a second period of enforced sleep.

Again the Rovers had tried to battle on with two of their best men short, and again they had lost. The evening papers were full of pars about the strange coincidence.

Hawke was at the station to meet the team when it returned. He had not been idle that afternoon, but kept the results of his work to himself. Thackeray and Towler looked a bit pale but were quite fit enough to talk about their experiences. It was Towler whom Hawke mostly questioned.

"I want you to think back over the first half and try to remember if anything out of the ordinary happened to you. Try to think over every minute of the time. Did anyone bump you extra hard? Did you feel any pricking sensation, or anything of that kind?"

"Not a hloomin' thing," growled Towler, limping rather badly. "They hardly got near my goal to test me. All I remember is getting cold waiting for something to do."

"You're limping. How's that—a kick?" The goalie nodded. "Which of

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the other side did that? Can you remember?"

Towler grinned.

"You won't get much of a cline out of that. It wasn't one of the others who did that at all, but one of our own men, Hoskins, over there. He tried to beat Simes, their centre, who jumped for the ball as I ran out and punched it clear, and landed on me instead of the ball." He scowled. "I forgot to tell him about it after the other business happened. He's a bit too wild with his feet. Did the same thing to me once before."

### The New Players.

THACKERAY had nothing more interesting to impart. The affair looked like being an unsolved mystery. The disheartened Rovers wondered if they were going to win a game at all this season, or whether this mysterious sleeping sickness was going to follow them throughout.

"Beats me why anyone wanted to do it," grumbled the manager to Hawke later on. "Isn't as though there's heavy betting on these games."

"All the same, I heard that someone was laying odds of five to one against you here in Felton before the match came off," remarked Hawke.

"By Jove! There was! Who the deuce was that?"

"I'm not sure yet, but after your next match I hope to know more about it. Meantime, can you give me the addresses and histories of all your own men?"

"Our own men! Why, yes, of course, but——" Hawke did not explain, but spent some time that evening studying the particulars that had been sent him.

Two of the team appeared to be comparative newcomers, new that season, Hoskins, the centre-half, and Gunner, the left-back. Tommy was rather surprised when he was put on to the job of shadowing each of these for the rest of the week.

He did not see much of Hawke during

those days, and the detective seemed to spend most of his time dressed like an out-of-work tough in some of the downtown saloons.

Each night he read Tommy's reports, but the two men under observation seemed to lead blameless lives, spending their time either at the training centre or at their homes. Gunner lived with his wife on the north side of the town, and Sid Hoskins had lodgings down by the river.

### Hawke Starts Betting!

ON Friday night, Hawke did not get back to their hotel until after midnight. Tommy was waiting for him.

"Thought you were never coming, guv'nor."

"I've been laying bets," confessed the detective with a grin. "I've bet a hundred pounds that Felton will not do the 'hat-trick' by losing this Saturday, and I've got odds of seven to one. Pretty good going, eh?"

Tommy goggled.

"Gosh, who laid those odds?"

"Calls himself Smith, but, as a matter of fact, it's the same red-faced, jolly-looking man we saw taking bets that first Saturday afternoon."

Tommy's jaw dropped more than ever.

"Crumbs, that's funny! I had something to tell you about him. Soon after dark this evening he visited Hoskins at his digs. I was on watch at the time. He stopped in there for more than an hour, and when he came out he left by the backyard instead of coming out in the street. What do you think of that, sir?"

"We'll think more about it to-morrow," said the detective, "but just now I'm going to sleep."

Which he duly did, leaving Tommy awake trying to puzzle things out.

The following afternoon was wet, but a tremendous crowd turned out to see the match, for everyone was wondering

# The Doped Footballers

whether the disasters of the last two matches were to be repeated.

The Rovers had not got their strongest team out, Towler being replaced by one of the reserves, and Thackeray being still off colour since his mysterious attack of sleepiness. But, all the same, the Pelton Rovers were eager to avenge their two recent losses, and in the first half they ran their opponents off their feet.

Their idea seemed to be to score as many goals as possible in the first half, in case the "hoodoo" was put on them again during the interval. The interval came at last, with the score at three to one in their favour.

Directly the half-time whistle blew, Hawke made a bee-line for the pavilion. He had not missed a single move of the first half, and now there was an ominous light in his eyes as he marched up to the manager.

## The Kick On The Knee.

"NOW there's going to be fireworks," thought Tommy. "The chief's got something up his sleeve."

Hawke had.

"You'll be playing one man short again next half," he announced to the bewildered manager. "They've done it on Watson. He will be feeling sleepy by now. He'll be off in a few minutes."

Over in a corner, Watson was sitting on top of a box, stifling a yawn.

"What's that?" he demanded. "You say they've done it on me? Who? When?"

"You feel sleepy!" queried the detective.

"Rottenly so. I believe you're right, but I'm blessed——"

"How did you get that kick on the knee?" rapped out Hawke. "Who gave it you?"

Watson looked down carelessly at the broken bruise, which he had not even troubled to sponge.

"Oh, that? Blessed if I remember.

Got it in some scrimmage or other, I suppose."

"Well, I can tell you how it happened," went on Hawke. "You were kicked by one of your own side, by Hoskins. I saw it happen."

He looked at Hoskins severely, and the tall, angular half-back nodded.

"Believe I remember," he said. "It was an accident. Sorry!"

"A lot of these accidents happen to you," went on Hawke. "In the match with the Robins you kicked Watson and Towler. Last Wednesday you landed on Towler again, and Thackeray as well."

The man slid from the table.

"Look here, what are you getting at?"

"Your boots," snapped Hawke, stepping forward. "Let me see the studs."

The half-back darted a frightened look at the detective, then turned to run, but a dozen willing hands seized him, dragged him back, and held him while Hawke examined the studs on his boots, and looked ready to pull him to pieces when the Dover Street sleuth pointed out that two distinct pin points nestled among the leather grip studs.

"Those were doped before you kicked Watson. Now he's also asleep. You understand?"

"I didn't! I tell you——"

"It's no good, Hoskins, we've got it on you. I can have these pins examined by competent experts, and they will be able to tell me just what dope you used. Of course, you were never suspected, as you were on the home side. It was a dirty trick, but clever. Who put you up to it?"

Hoskins looked round savagely at his glowering colleagues, the men he had betrayed. Perhaps it was their fierce looks that scared him.

"A chap called Holloway," he moaned. "I—he did everything. It was his idea. He paid me ten quid every time I brought it off."

"Is he fat, with a red face?" questioned Dixon Hawke. The other

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nodded. "Very well, I have to pay him a hundred pounds if your team loses. I'm afraid I'll take a policeman along with me as witness that I pay my debts."

Which he did, there being two policemen in plain clothes, as well as Tommy; and although the Rovers did not lose that day, but succeeded in fighting a draw without Watson, Holloway was there to argue about splitting the odds.

Five minutes later he was being driven to the police station between stalwart constables, and, within an hour, confronted by Hoskins, he had

admitted the whole miserable plot.

It was a South American arrow poison he had used to doctor the pins in the studs of Hoskins' boots, and he admitted that, if the season had proved profitable because of the Rovers' losses, he had intended trying the stunt on a more important team the next year.

But when the footer season opened next year both he and the treacherous half-back were spending their time in a place where no football results were read, and the Pelton Rovers soon climbed back near the top of the league again.





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